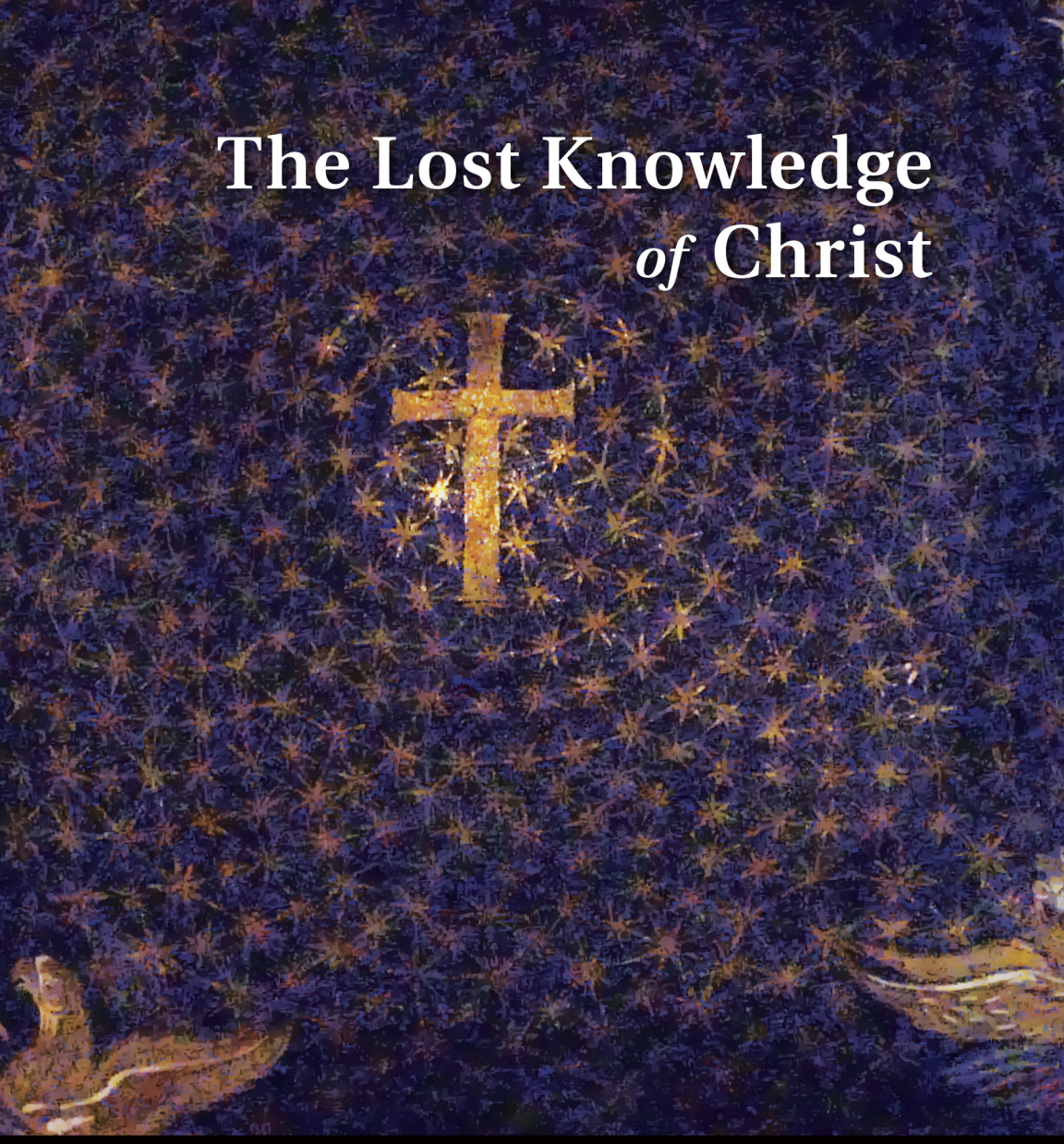
The Lost Knowledge *of* Christ



Contemporary Spiritualities, Christian Cosmology, and the Arts

DOMINIC WHITE

VISIT…

All content available from the Liturgical Press website is protected by copyright and is owned or controlled by Liturgical Press.

You may print or download to a local hard disk the e-book content for your personal and non-commercial use only equal to the number of copies purchased. Each reproduction must include the title and full copyright notice as it appears in the content.

UNAUTHORIZED COPYING, REPRODUCTION, REPUBLISHING, UPLOADING, DOWNLOADING, DISTRIBUTION, POSTING, TRANSMITTING OR DUPLICATING ANY OF THE MATERIAL IS PROHIBITED.

ISBN: 978-0-8146-8294-4

"Against a broad sweep of Christian tradition and nonreligious and contemporary spiritualities, Dominic White, warmly and tantalizingly, invites the reader to 'leave the prison of our heads and join the risen Lord and his community of divinized human beings, cosmic people.' Opening up 'the great lost tradition of cosmology' through five sources—Scripture, apocryphal writings, the Church Fathers, the liturgy, and Christian art—this dancing friar passionately explores liturgy and art, the 'great carriers of Christian cosmology,' through different ways of knowing, escaping analysis. This is a book to return to for both information and to reconnect with lost treasure."

—Elizabeth Baxter
Priest and Executive Director of Holy Rood House,
Centre for Health and Pastoral Care, and
The Centre for the Study of Theology and Health

"So much of Christianity has been deprived of its context. Fr. Dominic White reconstructs this 'Lost Knowledge'—the original cosmology—by leading us from lesser-known writings of the early Christians to the art, customs, and liturgy of later times. These are more familiar but now not fully understood because they too have lost their context. In this book we meet a brilliant mind, a warm heart, and a gentle humor that open up the somehow familiar world of our ancient cosmology and shed new (or old?) light on current disputes and concerns in the church."

—Dr. Margaret Barker
Author of *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*

"This is a courageous book. The author dares to venture into forms of spirituality which may sound bizarre and are easily dismissed and there detects a hunger for aspects of our Christian tradition which have been largely forgotten. It is scholarly, daring, and beautifully written, a rare combination."

—Timothy Radcliffe, OP
Author of *Stations of the Cross*

"In this brave and engaging book, Fr. Dominic White takes us on a voyage of exploration in search of the lost knowledge of Christ: a lost knowledge of the Cosmic Christ and a spiritual cosmology of angels and the heavens. Exploring hidden ('apocryphal') scriptures and the deeper meaning of the Christian liturgy, and drawing on music and the arts, Fr. Dominic helps us discern a renewed and renewing vision of Christ and the cosmos and the place of the human within it."

—The Very Reverend Archpriest Andrew Louth, FBA
Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Byzantine Studies
Durham University, UK

The Lost Knowledge of Christ

Contemporary Spiritualities, Christian Cosmology, and the Arts

Dominic White, OP

A Michael Glazier Book

LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

Nihil Obstat: Timothy Radcliffe, OP, *censor deputatis*

A Michael Glazier Book published by Liturgical Press

Cover design by Jodi Hendrickson. Cover image: Wikimedia Commons.

Excerpts from documents of the Second Vatican Council are from the Vatican website.

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© 2015 by Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, microfilm, microfiche, mechanical recording, photocopying, translation, or by any other means, known or yet unknown, for any purpose except brief quotations in reviews, without the previous written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

White, Dominic.
The lost knowledge of Christ : contemporary spiritualities, christian cosmology, and the arts / Dominic White.
pages cm
"A Michael Glazier book."
ISBN 978-0-8146-8269-2 — ISBN 978-0-8146-8294-4 (ebook)
1. Biblical cosmology. 2. Spirituality—Christianity. 3. Christianity and other religions. I. Title.

BS651.W4248 2015
231.7—dc23 2014023485

This book is dedicated to the beloved memory of
three people who cared about truth:

My father, Raymond Gerard White (1942–2013),
my aunt, Ellen Louise Brush (1952–2011),
and Stratford Francis Caldecott (1953–2014).

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

1. The Story That Wouldn't Die 1
2. Contemporary Spiritualities: Old or New? 8
3. What Wisdom Knew 30
4. The Cosmic Cross 50
5. The Heavenly Journey 67
6. The Law of Music 91
7. Dancing with Angels 108
8. Overcoming the Stars 128
9. Wisdom's Liturgy 148
10. The Age of Revelation 167

Appendix: The Lost Knowledge of Christ and the Enneagram 189

Notes 193

Index 208

Acknowledgments

Writing, at its most basic level, is a solitary occupation. But if ever I needed proof that the human being is a social animal, it has been in writing this book. So many people have helped, knowingly or otherwise: first of all, my parents, who obtained such a wonderful education for me; the Dominican Order, for furthering that education, for supporting and challenging me; and all my family and many friends. The Bard School Christian artists' fellowship was also a formative context for thinking about art, spirituality, and the cosmos.

Most of the research was carried out as part of my master's in theology of the arts at the Institut Catholique de Paris where this book was researched. Denis Villepelet was an inspirational head of department, gladly embracing dance as a research method. I must also pay tribute to Odile Celier for her marvelous introduction to images and how to look at them, and to my colleagues, a wonderful intergenerational community. I'm grateful to Cambridge, Durham, and Newcastle universities for their superb and welcoming library facilities. The late, great Stratford Caldecott, gave me so much help and encouragement at the early stages. The Writers' Society at Northumbria University has been a lively and encouraging community for trying out bits of this book. Margaret Barker has been unflagging in her inspiration and encouragement, and while we'll probably never agree about the book of Deuteronomy in this life, I would never have found half the sources I've quoted without Margaret's help. Nicoletta Isar is another generous scholar who loves the big picture and let me use hers. Also to my confrere Lawrence Lew for letting me use his beautiful photos, and to Monika Chmelova (again) for her fine drawings. And may blessings abound on whoever set up Wikimedia Commons, and to all its contributors, which has kept this book at a reasonable price.

I'm especially thankful to friends who have read chapter drafts and made some very helpful comments: Colin Carr, Monika Chmelova (again), Alice Heans, Cathy Jones, Rudolf Loewenstein, Bess Twiston-Davies, and Zlata Vrabec. Big thank you also to Timothy Radcliffe, who stepped in at a critical stage of the project; Sarah de Nordwall, Silvia Caramella, and Quico Diaz (theological advice, good food, and good wine); Leonie Caldecott; Gabriella Debreczeni for her computer wizardry; Steve Day, Bob Ombres, John Patrick Kenrick, Jordan and Godwin Pullicino, Elizabeth St. John, Konstantin Pavlidis and Aniko Nagy, Satya Dunning, Gratiane and Gerhard Heusch, Mia Fox, Rabbi Aaron Lipsey, Rev. Sujatin Johnson, Roselyne Lauwick, Mark Vernon, Paddy Rylands, Rev. Christopher Lewis; Aidan Nichols, the Newcastle Philosophy Society God Group, Marie-Michèle Pelliet; Eliot Smith and his dance company; the Cosmos multimedia dance team (some fifty of you now!); Capucine Soupeaux; Jane Walling and Fritz Wefelmeyer. And of course to my editorial team at Liturgical Press: Lauren L. Murphy, Hans Christoffersen, Colleen Haider, Patrick McGowan, Colleen Stiller, and Stephanie Nix.

Excerpt from "O Faithful Cross," taken from *The Divine Office: The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite*, vol. 2, 573* (no. 21). Used by permission of *Stanbrook Abbey, Wass*.

At the time of publication, permission was still in process for the excerpt from *Merry Xmas Everybody* (1973) by Slade.

Chapter 1
The Story That Wouldn't Die

For images, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-1-the-story-that-wouldnt-die

How's this for spirituality? We're in a cathedral, and it's Easter. Everyone gathers around the labyrinth (yes, the cathedral has one as part of its floor; figure 1). The bishop follows the altar server to the center of the labyrinth. The server puts the ball in the bishop's hands. This is the signal: the organ sounds, the choir sings out, and the bishop throws the ball in the air. The dean catches it, takes a step to the rhythm of the music, then passes it on, till all the clergy are dancing around the labyrinth and passing the ball.

A "what if"? A New Agey flight of fancy? A recommendation for clergy stress relief? This is what actually happened at Easter in cathedrals up and down France until the mid-fifteenth century. The cathedral chronicles and rituals laid down how the Easter dance was to be done. Some bishops tried (unsuccessfully) to wriggle out of it. This was not just some medieval eccentricity or a hangover from paganism. It represented some very ancient Christian teachings about the cosmos. These same teachings were embedded in the architecture of the cathedrals themselves, the labyrinths on the floors, the frescoes and stained-glass windows. They structured the music, the seasons and feasts, and much else. Then the teachings got progressively forgotten and lost.

Many people would be surprised to learn that Christianity has any teachings about the cosmos. Surely God became human in Jesus Christ in

order to save humankind? This present world is passing. But we're living in an age of environmental crisis as the world warms up and the weather becomes unstable. This is impacting on everyone, from indigenous peoples in the Amazon and farmers in sub-Saharan Africa to flood victims all over the United States and Europe. Do Christians have nothing to say to this? Increasing numbers of younger people are discovering nonreligious spiritualities that have a strong rooting in nature and the cosmos—and therefore a strong motivation and *story* for ecological living. We find many books and DVDs on such spirituality in the Mind, Body, Spirit or Self-Help section of a local bookstore.

They also perhaps uncover something missing in our own spirituality. Many Christians instinctively call experiences like contemplating nature, being in the countryside or by the sea, or just looking at a tree in the street "spiritual moments." Many Christians have some sense of a "connectedness" with nature. Taking this recognition of connectedness a bit further, however, some followers of nonreligious spiritualities dance outdoors and speak of "dancing with the cosmos." How does this express itself in Christian faith? Isn't it all a bit pagan? Can we connect our experiences of nature with Christianity?

A particular feature of nonreligious spiritualities is that they don't exclude Jesus Christ. Some even speak of the "Cosmic Christ," although closer inspection reveals a Christ very different from the one Christians believe in. He is either a shadowy spiritual figure, not really human, an ascended master like the Buddha, or even that which we can become with the appropriate knowledge of self and cosmos—this might include some rituals and practices. Magic? Paganism? Quite possibly. Also, nonreligious spiritualities often draw on legends that grew up around the Gnostic heretics, such as that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and they had children. This story was one of the main inspirations for Dan Brown's blockbuster *The Da Vinci Code*. Even though Brown himself protested that he was only writing fiction, the novel seemed to strike a massive chord with people. They're still making pilgrimages to the obelisk in the Church of St. Sulpice, Paris (figure 2), and walking the "Rose Line" on the church floor, both part of a "gnomon" or astronomical device. The fact that—as it says on a notice in St. Sulpice—the obelisk is actually eighteenth century, not Egyptian as in Dan Brown's novel, doesn't seem to put people off.

The cynical might say that when people cease to believe in Jesus Christ, they'll believe in anything. But what is it that makes what we might call "lost knowledge" stories so successful? *The Da Vinci Code* is only one of many thrillers that usually have a plot something like this: a crime takes place in connection with a newly discovered ancient document or artifact associ-

ated with Jesus Christ. A hard-bitten, maverick FBI/CIA agent teams up with an attractive young female academic in hot pursuit of said document or artifact (stereotypes may be broken by rearranging the gender distribution). In a plot usually involving governments, terrorists, car and helicopter chases, shoot-outs in exotic places, speculative science, and a hardline and thoroughly unscrupulous Vatican official determined to suppress the truth at all costs, the document/artifact is finally rescued by our hero and heroine, who by now are a couple. They discover that the document came from/was preserved by an early Christian group (or the medieval Knights Templar) who were suppressed as "heretics" by the Church. (The Church apparently got its firepower by ganging up with the civil government and establishing itself as the smug and powerful state religion.) The document/artifact reveals Christ to be very different from what the nasty, patriarchal Church made him out to be: instead, he's gentle, inclusive, preaches a strongly natural and cosmic spirituality; he affirms the feminine and sexuality and sets everyone free from guilt, sin, and rules.

These stories are not invented out of nothing. The "lost document" theme is inspired by real discoveries. One such example is the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were found in 1946 by a Bedouin shepherd at the site of a Jewish community contemporary with Jesus at Qumran in the West Bank. The scrolls took decades to fully publish and were surrounded by scholarly rivalry, with many scholars not even having access to photographs of them. The scrolls are very important, not least because they give pre-Christian origins to what were thought to be changes to the Old Testament made by Christian scribes.

Another example is the Nag Hammadi Gnostic library—its discovery was worthy of an Indiana Jones movie. Just a year before the Qumran find, a farmer involved in a blood feud discovered a library of ancient books in a desert cave in Nag Hammadi, Upper Egypt. A one-eyed outlaw acquired and sold some of the codices, though others had already been burnt for fear of their possible "effects." Quarrels up to government levels about who actually owned the books led to gentlemen scholars turning into international smugglers. (And of course there was scholarly rivalry!) Full publication of the texts in translation didn't happen till the late 1960s[1] and continued until the 1990s. At last, the writings of the Gnostics were revealed in their own words. These groups, most of them split from the mainstream Christian church in the second century, had gospels, epistles, and other texts in a scriptural style, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Epistle of Peter to Philip*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (figure 3). What was written by the Gnostics themselves and what was taken from the early Church continues to be debated by scholars. What is clear, though, is that the Nag Hammadi texts

stressed *knowledge* (*gnosis* in Greek, hence "Gnostic") rather than faith and authority; a rich and complex cosmology of multiple heavens; rituals for ascending the heavens; a belief that human souls are angels fallen into matter; and a strong emphasis on the feminine divine, along with the suggestion in the *Gospel of Philip* that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were lovers. Sound familiar?

More recently, in 2011, some small books made from lead and sealed with rings were found in Jordan. They were covered in what could be Jewish/early Christian imagery and a Hebrew script. Were they the "sealed book" of Revelation, chapter 5, or cheap forgeries?[2] The academic disputes about them are already bitter, and I have even heard worrying reports of serious intimidation and physical attacks.

Now, of course, people have always loved mysteries, which is why even the wackiest "alternative histories" of the "aliens built the pyramids" kind will forever be popular. Indeed, St. Paul lamented how people wouldn't accept sound doctrine but, "having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires" (2 Tim 4:3). At the same time, reading stories is one of the ways we search for *meaning*, for deeper truths to answer our great life questions concerning why we're here, what it's all about, and so on. In fact, all the stories of the world can probably be reduced to seven basic plots: Voyage and Return, Comedy, Tragedy, Rags to Riches, the Quest, Rebirth (=Salvation?), and Overcoming the Monster. Looking for lost knowledge fits the Quest plot.

But stories such as *The Da Vinci Code* that so grab people's attention obviously touch them very deeply. They seem to speak of something, perhaps something so deep down that we're not even aware of it, that we seek but can't find. Or perhaps a memory, or the memory of a memory, that we've somehow inherited. Some of the great epics are like this: the stories of the British King Arthur may well be based on a real Romano-British king who resisted Saxon invaders in the fifth and sixth centuries. We do know that the "British" (mixed Celtic and Roman) peoples were pushed by the Saxons to the west of Britain and are the ancestors of many of the modern inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall. The legend of King Arthur therefore became an identity myth for a subject people (as well as being taken up and Christianized as part of the Holy Grail story, another Quest).

So stories can fill gaps for things we've lost or lack (such as independence and sovereignty for the British Celts). The thrillers that are inspired in part by Gnostic texts speak of a cosmological spirituality, the inclusion of the feminine, and freedom from organized religion—especially the sin, guilt, and rules that come with it. As I said earlier, many Christians find spirituality in nature but struggle to connect this with their Christian faith. Unlike the

"spiritual but not religious" people, we may also struggle to find a Christian spirituality for the environment. Christians who have explored this have often been suspected by their churches—rightly or wrongly—of heresy.

Our churches are, in fact, places of division: everyone will be familiar with the "liberal" and "conservative" labels that cut right across denominations, themselves the inheritors of historical divisions between the Christians whom Jesus prayed would be one. Often these labels, which many of us may find both frustrating and simplistic, are applied around debates over authority, liturgy and worship, sexuality, male and female roles, the relationship of Christianity to other religions and beliefs, and even the place of the arts in church. And, of course, there have been appalling scandals too, the worst being the hidden abuse of children over decades. Pope Francis recently said:

> I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds.[3]

And none of us lives our spirituality in a bubble. We live in daily "culture wars" between "secular" and "religious" views of how society should be run. In culture—media, literature, visual arts, film, music, and dance—these questions are continually present and debated. We may often feel—and I especially think of the pain of parents who have seen their children stop going to church—that we can't quite find the words to make the *connection* between our faith in Jesus Christ and other people's lives. Maybe we feel there's something that *ought* to be in our story but is missing.

I believe that the ancient Christian teachings about the cosmos I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter may provide us with resources for a new (or very old!) way of talking about Jesus Christ. I've also come to the conclusion that contemporary spiritualities and the "lost document" thriller, of which people never seem to tire, all contain memories of the ancient Christian cosmology. This powerful spirituality of the early Church was largely lost by the end of the Middle Ages (the Easter dance that expressed it disappeared at the same time). With the loss of Christian cosmology, we lost a connection with nature and with ourselves. The memory of this tradition, albeit distorted, is the memory of a story that wouldn't die, because it's a story we need.

Starting from the desire to integrate my own personal spiritual journey—one rooted in nature and the cosmos—with my Catholic Christian faith, reflecting especially on my conversations with spiritual but nonreligious people, and trying to respond to the Vatican's call to "make the most of the riches of the Christian spiritual heritage" in response to the rise of

New Age–inspired spiritualities,[4] I undertook two years of intensive research on Christian cosmology. The results I share with you here.

There are two aspects of Christian cosmology, this "lost knowledge," that are very important. First, it does not add anything to what has been passed down in the Church in Holy Scripture and the entire teaching tradition of the Church. It is not a "secret teaching" in that sense. Rather, it sheds light on many Bible passages and traditions that can often seem strange or unimportant.

Second, I believe Christian cosmology offers resources for us to speak to many of the problems, questions, and issues we face both in the Church and in society—and indeed in ourselves, *particularly the issues that seem to put people off Christianity* and attract them to nonreligious spiritualities. Christian cosmology has remarkable insights about sin and guilt, spirituality and psychology, authority, God and the feminine, what happens after we die, liturgy, worship and art (including dance), the artistic vocation, relationships, the body, the mind-body-spirit-nature connection, suffering and evil, ecology, and economics. It also offers new resources for approaching the divisions between Christians, such as the Virgin Mary, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, and the East/West split.

It does not provide instant answers—it is in some ways more like the parables of Jesus, stories that challenge our view of the world, narrative riddles if you like, that Jesus invites us to mull over and penetrate. They are teachings that don't so much say, "This is how things are, take it or leave it," but invite us to have a conversation with God. This is in fact how, in the Catholic Church, theology is meant to be done. Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval philosopher and theologian, is held up as a model for theologians today. This is not only because of his remarkable wisdom and his demonstration of the harmony of faith and reason but also because he is capable of listening to and integrating different points of view. Every question he tackles, even the question of the existence of God, begins by considering the case against. I've found that in trying to interpret Christian cosmology for today's world, it has both given me great resources and obliged me to think. I'm well aware that my interpretations are not the only possible ones and are very provisional. I hope that they will open up a conversation.

How to Use This Book

The intention of this book is to make Christian cosmology accessible to the general reader and thereby offer new resources for giving an account of faith. It is not an academic book. Because, however, of the unfortunate

tendency of many popular spirituality books of the "spiritual but not religious" kind to make interesting but very controversial claims about early Christians beliefs without giving their sources, I've provided endnotes to each chapter where I quote my sources so that you can read them and interpret them for yourself. Sometimes, where there are a lot of sources, I refer to the academic articles I've published on Christian cosmology. These articles list all the sources in detail. And there is not one "lost document" among my sources, although many of them are little-known texts from the early Church and pre-Christian and Jewish sources. I hope you won't be too disappointed that finding them didn't involve car chases or shoot-outs in exotic places. Almost everything I quote can be found in the library of any university that has a Christian theology department. Most of my sources are available in English translation. Many can also be found online. In other words, these "lost teachings" of Christianity are actually right under our noses! We'd just forgotten about them.

For quotations from the Bible I use the New Revised Standard Version, though occasionally the insights of Christian cosmology prompted me to retranslate the original text.[5]

One thing I discovered while researching this book is that much of Christian cosmology was transmitted through the visual arts, music, architecture, and even movements and gestures in the liturgy. In an ideal world, this book would be full of glossy photos and be accompanied with a DVD. But that would make it prohibitively expensive. To be accessible to the widest possible audience, the cost needs to be kept as low as possible. I have therefore put images, music, and video for the appropriate chapters of the book up on a blog, http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com. A URL will direct you to the appropriate page. The blog is also a place where you can post comments and we can deepen our understanding of Christian cosmology. For one thing, to keep the book a reasonable length I've only discussed the key sources here, focusing mainly on the early ones. You may find other material in spiritual writers I haven't mentioned, in art, and in your own experience. I'm excited about where this sharing of riches might take us and how it will change my interpretations as we seek the truth together. Indeed, while the Church of Christ is continually wounded by divisions caused so often by people not listening but attacking instead, perhaps the conversation we can have on the blog will be an experiment in unity.

With that in mind, let's begin our recovery of Christian cosmology by looking not at our own tradition but at the beliefs of the "spiritual but not religious" people out there—many of whom may be our friends or family members. What do they actually believe and practice? Where does it come from? What's old, and what's new?

Chapter 2

Contemporary Spiritualities: Old or New?

For images, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com
/chapter-2-contemporary-spiritualities-new-or-old

Although today, for many people, "spirituality" is not necessarily connected with religious practice, it is still a word they have in common with Christians and many other religious believers. In the churches, perhaps more laypeople than ever before consciously work on their own spiritual lives, receive and indeed give spiritual accompaniment, or spiritual direction as it is sometimes called. So can we find a common understanding of what spirituality means? This isn't easy, because by nature spirituality is deeply personal. And it goes beyond mere words: "that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

So perhaps we should look for common threads that would provide a "highest common denominator" between different opinions. But again, we need to avoid reducing spirituality to *only* what different spiritualities have in common: otherwise we're denying difference and disagreement and marginalizing beliefs that may be far from marginal to those who hold them. We saw in the last chapter how many spiritual but not religious people find their spirituality in nature. This is not a major theme in Christian spirituality today, but we'll see in the course of this book that it was very different in the early Church. In this chapter we're going to look at contemporary spirituality, primarily from the standpoint of spiritual but not religious people, examining the common ground, crossovers, and differences with Christianity. That will be our context for looking at early Christian cosmology.

Although contemporary spirituality strongly reflects Western society in that it is strongly individualistic—something seen as essential to personal freedom and thus especially varied—there are many common themes. Nature is one of them, but there are words which frequently crop up in books, magazines, websites, and conversations. Here is a partial list:

Acceptance
Alchemy
Altered States of Consciousness
Alternative
Angels
Aquarius
Astrology
Awareness
Beingness
Belief
Body
Celtic spirituality
Chakras
Change
Channelling
Communities
Consciousness
Cosmic
Cosmic Christ
Crystals
Dance/movement
Earth
Eastern
Ecology
Empowerment
Energies (positive and negative)
Esoteric
Everything for a reason or purpose
Feminine
Gaia
Global
Harmony
Healing
Healthy eating
Heaven
Higher self
Holistic
Initiation
Inner god/dess
Integration
Interconnectedness
Knowledge/gnosis
Ley lines
Local
Magic
Mandala
Meditation
Mindfulness
Mystery
Mystical
Nature/natural
Network
New Age
No coincidences
Nonjudging
Nonviolent
Oneness
Organic
Out of body experiences
Peace
Personal/self-development
Pilgrimage
Reincarnation
Right brain
Ritual
Sacred space/places
Sanctuary
Secret traditions
Shaman
Signs and symbols

Spas
Spirit
Spiritual
Sustainable
Tantra
Teachings
Temple
The Divine
Therapy
Universe/universal
Vegetarian/vegan
Vibrations
Vision
Yoga

Some terms, such as "beingness" and "mindfulness," come from Buddhism. Eastern religions and practices such as yoga are popular sources of inspiration in contemporary spirituality, not least because they offer spiritual experience, structure, and peace without the need for doctrine or formal belonging to a religious body. The human body—yoga, spas, and so on—is more explicitly present in these experiences than in the churches. Reincarnation, found in Buddhism and Hinduism, is contrary to Christian belief, while "angels" and "pilgrimage" are common to most religions. Some words can often be found in the greener end of politics, such as "change," "global," "local," "sustainable." Ecology is one of the most common themes of contemporary spirituality, a fruit of its focus on nature. "Gaia" (the Ancient Greek earth goddess) is a term coined by scientist James Lovelock as an understanding of the earth as a single interconnected organism. As such, we are dealing with science that in fact supports some particular philosophical and spiritual outlooks.

Some words will also be familiar to Christians: "initiation," "mystery," "ritual," for example. Do they mean the same as what we believe, though? Are these "rituals" liturgical or magic? And who or what is the Cosmic Christ? Is this Jesus? If not, who?

There are in fact a lot of oppositions. Even saying "I'm spiritual *but not* religious" is opposing a system of spirituality founded on being religious. Here are some more:

Spiritual	**Religious**
Belief	Dogma
The Divine	God
Cosmos	Creation
Teachings	Doctrine
Negative energy/negativity	Sin
No hell	Hell
Feminine/Mother Earth	Masculine/Father God
Community	Authority
Earth and nature/natural	The next world

Spiritual (cont.)	Religious (cont.)
Diversity/path	Exclusive truth
Global harmony	Right and wrong/truth and falsehood
Peace	Spiritual warfare
Sacred place/space	Church/mosque/synagogue/temple
Body	Soul
Network	Institution
Esoteric knowledge	Revealed truth
Healing	Redemption/forgiveness
Interconnected	Unique
Equality	Hierarchy
Awakening	Conversion
Self-development	Self-sacrifice
Nonjudgmental	Judgment
Self-acceptance	Repentance
Sacred	Holy
Respect	Missionary
Love	Charity
Sexuality	Chastity
Choice	Rules
Conscious	Conscience (guilty)
Cosmic	Human
Ethical living	Morality
Freedom	Obedience/restriction
Tolerance	Order

We might object that the right-hand column adds up to a pretty hard-line, not to say fundamentalist, kind of religion—one to which I wouldn't subscribe, nor would most religious people I know. Many Christians, from our own experience, would see healing and forgiveness, for example, as not opposed but essentially connected. But I sense that for many people—not just those who are spiritual—the list on the right is basically what religion, at least Christianity, Islam, and Orthodox Judaism, amounts to, even if a majority of religious people are genuinely nice and kind and will put their beliefs across gently. They can only be that nice and kind, it is thought, by in fact dissenting, consciously or otherwise, from some aspects of their religion.

On the other hand, simply in wanting to heal our world and build up society, spiritual and religious people have a lot in common. This shared desire can bring us into contact and offer us possibilities of working together. But this can be hindered by mistrust and genuine fear of compromising our nonnegotiables. And many "spiritual" people have left "religion," because they felt hurt by it.

The New Age

Contemporary spirituality is in fact at root a very ancient tradition which has surfaced at different times in history, most recently—and decisively—in the youth movement of the 1960s, which became the "New Age." According to sociologist Todd Gitlin, it began in the American civil rights movement, which focused especially on women's and black people's rights. Taken up by students and radical academics, it expanded into the peace movement. The American youth opposed their military's interventions in Cambodia and Vietnam. With the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which had America and Russia on the brink of nuclear war, the youth reasonably feared annihilation—but also dreamed of a new world of freedom, which they saw in *spiritual* terms. They were inspired by the Beat ("beatific") poets, especially Allen Ginsberg; music, especially Bob Dylan and Jefferson Airplane; the urge to get back to nature and to discover sexuality (enabled by the invention of "the pill"). All of this was, of course, strongly antiauthoritarian: for these youth, the government and the army had lost their authority by warmongering and discrimination; the police, by suppressing protest and enforcing racial segregation; and the Church, by its teachings on sexuality.

The young people turned to Eastern religions and spoke of "awareness" and "consciousness," and they seemed to have discovered a fast track to spiritual experience: drugs. These had long been used for their mind-altering properties in the shamanistic practices of some cultures. The "defrocked" Harvard professor Timothy Leary created a quasi-religious ashram called the "International Federation for Internal Freedom," where they experimented with LSD while researching cosmic imagery and ancient meditation and wisdom traditions such as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. And he grabbed headlines with slogans like "Tune in, turn on, drop out" and "Get out of your mind and into your senses."[1]

People started to talk of a New Age. There were "love-ins" that took place as a nature celebration-cum-festival and peace protest. Work and authority were out; play and universal love were in: perhaps you really could have heaven on earth. Flower Power was born, again fueled by music, drugs, and "free love." This culminated in San Francisco's "Summer of Love" in 1967 (figure 1), forever associating California with the New Age. By the time thousands of young people were singing, dancing, bathing naked, making love not war, and generally getting as high as kites at the Woodstock festival of 1969, student-led social revolution had spread to Europe: in 1968 massive student uprisings took place in Paris and also in other European university cities. The students strongly rejected much of what might be called traditional European culture and family values, embraced radical

Marxism, and called for the kind of personal freedoms, particularly in the area of sexuality, which have become normative in Western society. Many reforming theologians in the Catholic Church (including Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI) were deeply shocked by how far and fast things had gone.

On a spiritual level, Eastern gurus like Sai Baba (figure 2), adopted by the English pop group the Beatles, were attracting a wide following. Psychology—as it seemed to reject repression—became popular and popularized. Dead thinkers were resurrected: the Catholic priest, mystic, and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955, figure 3) became a best seller for his cosmic interest, and the psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961, figure 4) too for his affirmation of the unconscious and spiritual experience. Another psychologist, the radical R. D. Laing (1927–1989, figure 5)—"breakdown or breakthrough?"—became a guru to the Beatles, making him an instant celebrity.

The New Age is a bit old now. We're embarrassed by the self-indulgence of the predominantly middle-class hippies, the energy consumption of their amplifiers, and the devastation these supposed nature-lovers left behind at their festivals. The fact that they didn't produce heaven on earth makes us skeptical of their idealism. Many of their arguments were based on pseudoscience, i.e., making rapid, arbitrary connections between science and spirituality. They tended to read what they liked into their heroes of the moment or the spiritual figures of the past and present, whether Jesus, Buddha, or Teilhard de Chardin. And now we know the terrible side effects of LSD and heroin. Above all, the loss of a belief in a glorious future, coupled with the rise of individualism driven by the consumer revolution of the 1980s, means that spirituality has become more personal and is generally more about fulfilling present needs (such as healing) rather than being part of a mass movement (which could never really last if individual freedom was the highest value).

Yet cannabis and cocaine have become more socially acceptable (an instant mystical experience?). There is much greater equality for women and ethnic minorities in society in general. Sexual ethics are regarded now as largely a personal matter, psychology and therapy are becoming a normal part of life, and mental illness is much less stigmatized. Eastern religions are better known, and it's less unusual now for a Westerner to say they're a Buddhist. More and more people I speak to say they find their spirituality in nature. And many people read, educate themselves, and question much more than in previous generations, though as a campus minister I see this gain eroded by consumerism and media bombardment (the internet is a mixed blessing in this regard). Confidence gained through education is eroded even more so by a general anxiety about the future. Wondering

more about their immediate futures, many (though not all) students seem to have little interest in, or time for, the "big questions."

Nevertheless, there is no absolute authority any more, and the individual comes before the group. There are periodic resurgences of the hippy movement, most recently in protests following the crash of 2008: the myth of endless economic growth has been found wanting. New Age communities such as Esalen in California and Findhorn in Scotland are still quite vibrant and have influenced the style of retreat centers and spas everywhere. Even within the churches, the "final say" of authority is questioned, worship and pastoral care are more orientated toward feelings and everyday problems, and many retreats are orientated toward nature and personal development. So all in all, the New Age may be past, but in many ways it has had as great an impact (likely a lasting one) as the Reformation.

The sixties hippies were not so new: they were in many ways fulfilling the dreams of radical thinkers such as dancer/choreographer Rudolf Laban and his collaborators (figure 6) and philosopher-mystic-artists Helena Blavatksy, Rudolf Steiner, and George Gurdjieff (figures 7–9), who were trying, amid the huge political, social, and economic changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to understand a world in which for many people traditional beliefs no longer made sense. They turned to ancient wisdom traditions such as the Chinese *I-Ching*, the Hindu *Upanishads*, and Gnostic texts. All of these writings were concerned with knowledge of the invisible layers of the cosmos and their relation to the physical world, especially human nature. Laban, Blavatsky, and the others sought to interpret them in the light of modern science and the arts.

Before them there were the "Hermetic" philosophers of the Renaissance and Reformation periods (fifteenth to sixteenth centuries). These were similar times of huge upheaval when the world people knew was changed forever. What was the truth about the world? What was reality? These thinkers—people such as Leonard of Pistoia, Marsilio Ficino, and Robert Fludd—drew especially on the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a body of writings attributed to an Egyptian sage known as Hermes Trismegistus ("Thrice-Great Hermes"). Considered very ancient but probably written down in the third or second centuries BC, they're essentially a mix of cosmological philosophy (e.g., "as above, so below," "Listen within yourself and look into the infinitude of Space and Time") with astrology and magic. The Renaissance Hermeticists considered them as representing a universal philosophy or wisdom tradition which God had revealed to humanity in ancient times—sometimes called *philosophia perennis*, or "perennialism." The Hermeticists used the Hermetic writings as a source for alchemy, the "science" of transforming base metals into gold, which may have been meant

literally or symbolically or both. This passed into secret societies such as the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons, and could involve an occult dimension.

The Gnostics of the first and second centuries were very interested in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and developed complex cosmologies (of which we'll see more in later chapters). Recognizing the similarities between the New Age and Gnosticism, Pope St. John Paul II said:

> We cannot delude ourselves that this will lead toward a renewal of religion. It is only a new way of practicing Gnosticism—that attitude of the spirit that, in the name of a profound knowledge of God, results in distorting his word and replacing it with purely human words. Gnosticism never completely abandoned the realm of Christianity. Instead, it has always existed side by side with Christianity, sometimes taking the shape of philosophical movement, but more often assuming the characteristics of a religion or para-religion in distinct, if not declared, conflict with all that is essentially Christian.[2]

Compare John Paul's words with the thought of Gary Snyder, a friend of the Beat writer Jack Kerouac and sometimes called the "Poet Laureate of Deep Ecology":

> Throughout the course of human existence, he [Snyder] held, there has been a Great Subculture stretching from ancient Shamanism and cave-painting to European witchcraft, Bengali Tantrism, English Quakerism, and manifestations in China and Japan on down to San Francisco hippies. It has preached trust in our natural being, along with a recognition, acting out, and exorcising of the demonic forces in the unconscious. This tradition has been subversive of civilization, which involves a ruling class and its law—and law takes hold of the social psyche most effectively if people doubt their nature, more particularly their sexual nature. To doubt human nature is also to doubt outer, wilderness nature, and therefore aim at control over the natural environment rather than to seek to live in harmony with it.[3]

Arguably, not all the ancient wisdom traditions were as "wild" as Kerouac/Snyder would have had them be. But clearly there was enough in the ancient traditions to speak to the hippies of the sixties who, like their forebears in the nineteenth and fifteenth/sixteenth centuries, were desperately seeking more than what the established culture could provide them. The desire to connect with nature is perhaps the most striking: people everywhere, from Christians to atheists, from artists to scientists, are starting to sense that the major cause of the environmental crisis is our disconnection from nature. Rather than regarding ourselves as part of a greater, natural, cosmic whole, humanity has separated itself, regarding itself as a superior

being that can use nature as it likes. Hence the deforestation, the pollution, the plundering of resources. In many ways a response to this catastrophe, contemporary spiritualities are essentially nature focused. The influence of the New Age was deemed so significant by the Vatican that in 1993, it produced a provisional report, *Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age*.[4]

Now that we've seen how and why an ancient tradition suddenly re-emerged in our times, for the rest of this chapter we're going to look at the predominant themes of contemporary spirituality in the light of the Vatican report and other studies and see how compatible they might or might not be with Christianity.

My Personal Quest: Body, Mind, and Spirit

Contemporary nonreligious spirituality begins with me—whether yoga, a book, or crystals, I decide what's right for me. In Christianity, God takes the initiative, loving the world so much that he sent his only Son (John 3:16). On the other hand, since the Middle Ages, people have been choosing their church: the churches of the preaching friars (Dominicans and Franciscans) were set up without parishes. People often chose to go there instead of their parish, at least some of the time, because they "found" something there. After the Counter-Reformation, a similar movement was seen toward the Jesuits. And so on. Today, much Christian preaching tends to be more on what being a Christian will do for me—for example, to realize I'm made in God's image (see Gen 1:26-27; 5:1).

Contemporary spirituality, too, is a journey of self-discovery. The difference is that we're totally free to create our spirituality as we go. Doctrine and intellectual coherence are not really important. We can borrow freely from all religions. We'll find in the Mind, Body, Spirit, or Self-Help/Self-Improvement, sections of a bookstore that Buddhist masters, angel books, and yoga books are there alongside the Bible and John Paul II. The preference among the Christian books is for Celtic Christianity and mystics such as St. Hildegard of Bingen and Meister Eckhart.

The Cosmic Christ

And there is the "Cosmic Christ": in nonreligious spiritualities, Christ is not so much a person to be worshiped as a state to be attained by spiritual knowledge. The Cosmic Christ is not God made flesh to be worshiped but

a "universal being," or a personal process of evolution toward a superhumanity, sometimes called "Christ consciousness" (like "Krishna consciousness"), or even god/dess (and note the mix of Christianity with Jewish Kabbalah and Gnosticism).[5]

Developing a "Christ consciousness," however, may not be as "heretical" as many Christians think. Christians have often forgotten that we pray to become "participants in his divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), a doctrine that Eastern Christians call *theosis*, or "divinization." According to St. Paul, Christ is truly cosmic: "He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). Christ appears to St. John seated on a rainbow (Rev 4).

Some contemporary spiritualities believe that Jesus went to India. In fact, this is the result of "Chinese whispers": in 1869 Louis Jacolliot published a book claiming striking parallels between Bhagavan Krishna, in Hinduism the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, and the life of Christ in the gospels.[6] The two lived at least three centuries apart and Jacolliot never actually claimed Jesus went to India! Clearly the belief that he did so shows a desire to make a Christ-Krishna/Christianity-Hinduism connection. *In contemporary spirituality, it ultimately doesn't matter whether a spiritual teaching or tradition is literally true or not: what makes it true is whether it's transformative for you.* At first sight this may appear ridiculous to Christians. Surely it's just a self-indulgent flight into fantasy. Yet how many of us who are practicing Christians have been convinced by rational arguments and hard facts? Yes, we believe that Jesus truly rose from the dead. But surely in practice what makes that important for us is that *we feel his resurrection has changed us*. Scientific arguments alone do not convince. Doctrine and morals are not enough to grab us, to *change* something in us. The Vatican report on the New Age spells it out clearly:

> People feel the Christian religion no longer offers them—or perhaps never gave them—something they really need. The search which often leads people to the *New Age* is a genuine yearning: for a deeper spirituality, for something which will touch their hearts, and for a way of making sense of a confusing and often alienating world.[7]

If church doesn't touch our heart, then why go there? But a ritual, drawn from Native American, Buddhist, Jewish traditions, psychology, that makes me feel different, that seems to change something in my life—for many people, these are the criteria for a spirituality that speaks to them. Furthermore, in an age of individualism—and this is perhaps the strongest pull—having to adhere to a doctrine, go through a process of initiation,

and *commit* to a group may feel like too much. Why do all that when we can have the mystical tradition without all the baggage that goes with it?

The Body

Contemporary spirituality is more obviously bodily than Christianity, whether it takes the shape of just being in nature or something more disciplined like yoga. While many people practice yoga without any spiritual interest (such as Iyengar yoga), there are more consciously spiritual forms such as Ashtanga and Tantra (which also harness sexual energy). Dance, whether traditional, Indian, or improvised, is popular, together with health/well-being experiences such as spas and sauna. These are seen not only as good for the body but also as bringing about great consciousness and awareness, or even an "altered state of consciousness." The Indian tradition of the chakras (figure 10)—seven "wheels" or energy channels between the top of the head and the base of the spine—is important in some spiritual and healing methods. In some traditions (especially in Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy) there's the idea of the aura—an "energy body" which surrounds the physical body, is visible to those who have the gift or the training to see it, and indicates the spiritual state of the person.

This is perhaps where we find it hardest to find connections with Christianity. While Christian worship can appeal strongly to the senses, especially in the Episcopal/Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox traditions (icons, incense, music, and so on), the main focus is on the *social* body of the Church: "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it," says St. Paul (1 Cor 12:27). He sees the different members like different organs: the body functions well if the members are in harmony. It is no coincidence that the same letter says a lot about practical charity and personal morality, because the flourishing of the body of the Church depends on them. We can see very positive fruits of this in the huge charity outreach of Christians: offering food to the starving, medicine to the sick, education to the poor and unlettered, companionship to the imprisoned and lonely, and campaigning for social justice. Communities in contemporary spirituality, by contrast, are based primarily on a common interest (e.g., learning yoga), and while friendships may develop, there is no *essential* commitment to mutual care. As a result, relationships and groups may be quite transient and fragile. When we are wounded, a solid community can provide us with the healthy "other" that takes us out of the prison of our heads.

But in terms of parish Christian culture, it is hard to find much said about bodily spiritual practice (in spite of our bodies being temples of the

Holy Spirit: 1 Cor 6:19-20). Ideas such as "consciousness" seem far from Christianity. One area of connection to the body is sexuality, which is often regarded by contemporary spirituality as "sacred" because it is one of the most powerful human experiences. Christianity has the sacrament of marriage, but this crossover is a minefield, given the sharp and widening differences between traditional Christian teaching and societal norms. Because the body *is* spiritual, without qualification, in contemporary spirituality, its followers struggle with the idea that "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit" (Gal 5:17). The perceived dominance of male leadership and teachings on modesty and chastity in traditional religion, together with the virtual absence of dance in American and European churches, are often regarded as antiwoman, anti-body, and antisex. Contemporary spiritualities prefer Mother Earth to Our Father in heaven, and many, perhaps the majority, of group leaders are women.

I do find in conversation that many followers of contemporary spirituality admire the community ethos of Christianity. Perhaps aware of the fragility of their own community structures, Nonviolent Communication (otherwise known as Compassionate Communication) has gained strong interest. This could help Christians with the frequent struggle they have with the balance implied in "love your neighbor *as yourself*" (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31). Also, while the focus on nature spurs many spiritual but not religious people into ecological activism, and many activists are spiritually inclined, we should note that one of the most dynamic ecological activists of our time is Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, who draws on the rich Orthodox theology of creation.[8] Eastern Christian spirituality does in fact attract some nonreligious people.

The Authorities of Healing

What commonly draws people to a more cosmological spirituality is the desire to be healed of pain—especially physical pain *as a manifestation* of psychological pain. Bereavement is, of course, one of the most difficult and most lasting pains: small wonder that contemporary spiritualities are strongly interested in the afterlife and may include practices such as spiritualism (contacting the dead through a medium). With Western medicine, anxiety and stress-associated conditions such as chronic pain, asthma, or irritable bowel syndrome are not easily treatable beyond pain management and symptom control. Psychology of a more holistic, less "clinical" kind may be attractive in such situations. We saw how psychology—often in popular form—was important to the New Age movement for ridding oneself of

repression that might well be caused by unquestioned societal structures (e.g., the role of women).

Especially noteworthy is the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Jung became a special guru for the New Age because his psychology was seen as uncoupling the myth value and experiences of religions from the need for belief. Jung was also influenced by Eastern philosophies and Gnosticism. He even wrote a neo-Gnostic text himself.[9] Emphasizing knowledge rather than faith as the way to enlightenment, Gnosticism has a strong cosmological theme, with a powerful intuition of the *microcosm-macrocosm* connection. This means that the microcosm (humankind) is profoundly connected with and "mapped" to the universe (macrocosm). This theme is very common across the world's wisdom traditions: in Buddhism there are many realms and heavens that correspond to a human inner state; there are the many heavens in Jewish Kabbalah and, similarly, a layered universe in Mayan religion. But such a cosmology seems absent from the general Christian consciousness. Everyone is familiar with—and many people argue over—the creation accounts in Genesis 1–2, but we seldom speak of the cosmos or cosmology in spiritual terms. This leads to a danger. If we have nothing to say about the cosmos, which is after all where human beings live, our religion may appear *literally* irrelevant to human life.

Perhaps the power of spiritual cosmologies lies in their ability to give us a story/myth/symbol of "how the world is" (especially when life has wounded us) and to restore our connection with a deeper level of the cosmos than the harsh indifference of the everyday world. This does sound somewhat like a desire for salvation, and that is all the more interesting as the original Greek word in the gospels for "to save," *sozein*, also means "to heal." "Your faith has healed/saved you," says Jesus to the woman who touched his garment (Matt 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50).[10] Brokenness of some kind is an all-time favorite motivation for coming to church, all the more apparent now that churchgoing is no longer a matter of social conformity.

Certain novels and films which follow the Quest archetype have gained authority in contemporary spiritualities, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*. The New Age bestseller, James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy*, while weak on plot development and characterization, is rich in psychological insight, to the extent that one fan told me she was sure it was a true story!

A healer gains authority through encounters with people that make them feel better. This healer could be a therapist, an astrologer, or someone who can see "auras." Note that people were astonished by Jesus because "he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt 7:28-29).

But human authorities may not be enough for healing. *Spirit* guides, such as angels, may be sought. According to one workshop advert, "We will be exploring how we can be more attuned to those beings that love us and care for us and are wanting to guide us personally."[11] Formation in how to access these angels or spirit guides may be through a teacher who believes that he or she "channels" them, or who teaches some other form of ritual to connect with them. Someone may sense the presence of an angel or spirit or "ascended Master" or "energy" but may seek help in understanding and using this sense. Reiki therapy is understood as channeling an energy. It is very controversial, with both positive and negative effects being reported by Christians. Be that as it may, authorities are judged on their results for *me*. In some ways it's a kind of spiritual free-market capitalism.

It's ironic that devotion to angels has diminished in the churches but is back big-time in nonreligious spiritualities. In fact, stories abound of people suddenly seeing or otherwise experiencing an angel in a life-saving or transformative way. Sometimes these experiences can be explained, but there is a "hard core" of cases that can't be. For example, a doctor reported that when she was a medical student on clinical practice and a firm atheist, a child was brought in from a road accident, unconscious, with a single bruise on her face. The absence of injuries was extremely surprising as the driver and eyewitnesses affirmed that the vehicle had gone over her with both sets of wheels. After some while the child awoke and asked for the man in white. When the doctor came forward, the child said, "No . . . the man in the long shiny dress . . . he stroked my face, as he picked up the wheels . . . the wheels did not touch me."[12]

Dealing with Evil

Angels are obvious comforting figures. They are less scary for many people than is God. But St. Paul warns the Corinthians that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14), and the Colossians are told not to be bullied into "worship of angels" (Col 2:18). This exposes a dangerous contradiction implicit in popular angel spirituality. Angels or other spirit guides are sought because they're more powerful than human beings. But then it's imagined that we can summon and dismiss them at will, like a spiritual handyman. Precisely *because* they are more powerful than us, they could easily deceive us. I notice that more spiritual but not religious people I speak to recognize the existence of a "dark side," and of the need to be protected against it. The New Age, in its more "classical" form, tends to deny evil. This may be a reaction against legalist, fundamentalist

forms of Christianity—but it's also dangerously naïve. This is picked up by psychotherapist Miriam Greenspan, herself spiritual but not particularly religious. While happily drawing on Judaism, Christian mysticism, Native American spirituality, and Vipassana Buddhism, she criticizes the New Age as being incapable of facing the reality of suffering:

> Denial [of suffering] is present in a different way [from in psychiatry] in a great deal of New Age literature on healing. Here an airy spiritual focus offers a healing path that often bypasses the reality of suffering on the ground—avoiding or denying the social roots of our pain and dissociating itself from the darkness in our world.[13]

She concludes, saying that only love and light are real is "a more popular form of false transcendence"[14] (transcendence = going beyond the purely physical). As a result, people are *not* healed. They simply run away from their pain and may even feel guilty about grieving. Or they may act it out in damaging ways. Greenspan, on the other hand, takes seriously clients who are grieving for all the wars in the world or for the environment: for her, grief is the first step toward compassion and action because it recognizes evil for what it is. Grief does not try to run away and pretend everything is fine. Spirituality magazines and websites tend to have large sections dedicated to healing.[15] This could indicate the success of spiritual healing practices, but it also might suggest that they are less successful than people would wish and that readers always need more.

The denial of evil also puts people at great risk of manipulation. The Vatican report on the New Age expresses particular concern about events which are called "retreats" or "initiations" but may involve brainwashing.[16] We probably have seen on a Mind, Body, Spirit bookshelf that there are a few books on magic and the occult. They wouldn't be there if people didn't want to use them.

Sacred Art

Perhaps people are seeking powerful spiritual experiences they don't find in church. Contemporary spirituality is highly imaginative and indeed has recovered a sense of the *sacredness* of art. I know a musician who believes that she channels the spirit of the prophetess Miriam, the sister of Moses. She does this primarily through sound, having an extraordinarily pure voice that vibrates through one's body. It's an "energy," a term much used around healing practices in New Age and contemporary spiritualities,

and in fact found also in the book of Wisdom: "For it is he [God] who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity [literally, 'energy'] of the elements" (Wis 7:17).

In contemporary spirituality music is not about praising God: it's about a sound that comes from the heavenly realm and may heal us spiritually, emotionally, and physically. It may even heal the environment. There are marvelous folk tales of singers who could make plants grow, like Orpheus.[17] Indeed, music, art, and dance are all used in therapy. The young David successfully treated King Saul's depression by playing the lyre for him (1 Sam 16:14-23, figure 11). Most people have an instinctive sense that music has a healing power. Pre–New Age teachers such as Rudolf Steiner and George Gurdjieff had music and the other arts as *integral* parts of their spirituality (figure 12). In Christianity, music is valued, but it tends to be more decorative and illustrative. It's not as *essential* as the Word in Protestantism or the sacraments in Catholicism. Only in Eastern Orthodoxy is the liturgy always sung. Otherwise, setting music and the arts in general at such a high spiritual level and authority tends to be seen in Christian circles as somewhat *esoteric* and therefore suspicious. Gurdjieff claimed to teach "esoteric Christianity," though later his context was Sufism (mystical Islam), in which music, poetry, and movement (as in the whirling Dervishes, figure 13) are very important.

Esotericism

Contemporary spirituality is fascinated by anything regarded as esoteric. The Cosmic Christ is the esoteric Christ. Literally "esoteric" means "inner," as opposed to "exoteric," which means "outer." All religions have exoteric features which physically mark them as distinct: Scriptures, practices, rules, rituals, and so on. Then they have their inner spiritualities, of which these exoteric features are usually held to be signs or gateways. In practice, many believers of the religion may be unaware of or uninterested in this inner spiritual tradition (often called "mysticism" in Christianity). One feature of contemporary spiritualities, insofar as they reject religion, is that they are basically an "inner" spirituality without an "outer" structure of organized religion. They risk engendering a certain spiritual superiority complex that may move the practitioner to withdraw from "ordinary" religious people. What outer practices there are—like Gurdjieff's use of music—are valued for their capacity for bringing about inner change, and so may be changed at will. These outer practices do not sound very unlike sacraments in Christianity, except that in contemporary spiritualities, these outer practices are not

fixed. Gurdjieff took very different approaches within his lifetime, from music and movement to group work.[18]

Esotericism has come to be associated with the occult, which we've already seen is one of the risks and indeed possible ways of contemporary spirituality. "Occult" comes from the Latin word *occultus*, meaning "hidden." It has taken on connotations of black magic/devil worship and manipulative spiritual practices, practiced by an "esoteric" (i.e., "inner") group who keep their knowledge and practices secret from outer society. Because their practices are hidden, people understandably fear they may be "up to something"—like the witch or warlock of fairy tales. Similar accusations are made about Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism.

How much grounds do these accusations actually have? Clearly, if some practices are hidden, people outside the group, the outsiders, might be jealous and in any case will have little evidence to go on. Nevertheless there have been worrying testimonies by ex-members of secret societies. Regardless, what is indisputable is that human beings are capable of doing deliberate harm as well as good. An inner tradition that has no "outer" religion or community to guide and protect it is unavoidably vulnerable to all this—as we've seen in the case of angel spirituality. At the same time, there's a risk that Christians will reject all that is "inner" and "mystical" for fear that it may be heretical or esoteric—and be left with only a dull outer shell.

The Greater Cosmos

While much New Age and contemporary spirituality was and is self-focused, many of its adherents "see themselves bound up with that spirituality which lies at the heart of the cosmic order as a whole."[19] All life, including our thoughts and feelings, is interconnected energy. So, according to the New Age, we work with Spirit and these energies in cocreating our reality. Though held in the dynamic of cosmic love, we are jointly responsible for ourselves, our environment, and all life: a *holistic* outlook and spirituality. This belief in responsibility for the world also flows from the influence of Buddhism: according to the Bodhisattva ethic in Zen, the disciple should show universal compassion by identifying himself or herself with all living beings. This encourages vegetarianism, a strong current of many contemporary spiritualities, as well as cooking and growing organic food. It provides a spiritual impetus for recycling and cutting car use.

The intense identification with all living things can lead one to understand the earth itself as a most dynamic and personal giver of life—very often feminine. Understanding the earth as feminine also fosters a link

with feminist thought, and many currents of feminist thought hold patriarchy responsible for harming the earth. Increasingly in contemporary spiritualities, *the earth itself has become a spiritual authority*—and perhaps a defining authority.

This may explain the recent growth of paganism in a form that is commonly called "witchcraft." It has always been present in Western societies. What is distinctive about (neo-) pagans (figure 14) is that they have

> an especially strong sense of connectedness with nature. Frequently using the term "the Goddess" to express the natural realm, a primary task, for many, is to heal. Coming into harmony with oneSelf [*sic*], one quite naturally comes into harmony with nature. One "knows" how to behave with regard to the environment. Many are thus direct activists or eco-warriors. [. . .] Many more practice magical rituals.[20]

Notice how nature, a type of "knowing," ecological activism, and magic are all bound up. For a generation mistrustful of hierarchy and institutions, paganism is especially attractive, being informal, individualistic, and participative: spirituality, fun, and humor can happily go together. Paganism can be pretty well made up as we go, with nature and ecology being perhaps the only "fundamental doctrines." The pagan feasts are intimately connected with natural cycles, such as solstices and equinoxes. There's also the May festival of Beltane, harvest, and the feast of the dead at Halloween (Samhain).

Shamanism—found right across the world's cultures—is one popular way of practicing paganism. Shamans are people who, through what might be called "techniques of ecstasy," serve as intermediaries and mediators of healing between the spirit and human worlds. Shaman Gabrielle Roth writes:

> Shamanic healing is a journey. It involves stepping out of our habitual roles, our conventional scripts, and improvising a dancing path. . . . To unleash the body, heart, mind, soul, spirit to discover the dancer, singer, poet, actor, healer within.[21]

Note the strong connection expressed between shamanic spirituality and body-based performance art (which seems to have replaced the use of drugs in the sixties). Actual belief does not seem to be required: for Paul Heelas, shamanism, presumably as practiced in the contemporary West, "is taken to be about effecting new dimensions of consciousness rather than believing in, and visiting other worlds."[22] And so today's paganism, be it shamanic, Druidic, or Wiccan (Wiccans do not like the pejorative term "witchcraft"),

is about making myths rather than beliefs. So whether "the Goddess" exists "out there," in the human heart, or is one or many, doesn't matter.

The problem, though, is actually the same as for angels: the pagan practitioner is accessing higher spiritual powers *precisely because they are more powerful than what can ordinarily be had in the world*. How do we know that they are benign? None of this takes away from a degree of ecological commitment that would put many Christians to shame, but could it ultimately undermine that involvement?

The ancient practice of astrology is popular and widely accepted in contemporary spiritualities as part of the belief in the interconnectedness and spirituality of everything. With the influence of the stars, nothing is a coincidence—a sort of nonreligious counterpart to the idea of Divine Providence. Astrology is believed to help us understand planetary influences on our personality (birth-chart astrology) as well as predict both our own and other people's futures. This sets it in opposition to the Jewish and Christian traditions: Deuteronomy 18:10 unequivocally condemns all forms of divination.

The New Age was often called the Age of Aquarius, after the astrological sign, and this is still commonly found in nonreligious spiritual literature and websites.[23] Astrological "ages" are based on the fact that it takes about 2,160 years for the spring equinox to shift from one constellation of the zodiac to another. There is in fact fierce debate over how this should be calculated, and current estimates for the beginning of the Age of Aquarius range from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth century! Nevertheless, New Agers seized on it in the sixties. "Aquarius" means "water bearer," and perhaps because water is about flow, Aquarius is said by some astrologers to "rule" everything from communication and transportation to freedom, democracy, nonconformity, and irresolution.[24]

Sound like our times? Of course, it's easy to read into an "age" what we want to be there. If we're in the age of the water bearer, we also live in an age marked by floods and tsunamis. But what's particularly significant is that the Age of Aquarius succeeds the Age of Pisces, the Fish, during which Christ was born. Some of his miracles and associated teachings revolve around fish—huge catches or feeding thousands of people with very few fish. The persecuted early Christians used the Greek word *ichthys* ("fish") as a secret sign, since in Greek the letters made the acrostic "Jesus Christ Son of God and Savior." Pisces is associated again with prayer, reclusion (monastic life), sensitivity, pain, and suffering—Christ on the cross. To say that we are passing from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius was read by Carl Jung to mean that the Christian age is being left behind.[25] Others, though, might see it as the time of "a new heaven and a new earth" prom-

ised by the Bible (Rev 21:1), which will take place when Christ returns. But first the Antichrist has to come: and for spiritual people who regard Christianity as authoritarian and glorifying renunciation and suffering, the idea of "Antichrist" may be a not unattractive figure.

Pilgrimage and Place

One thing contemporary spiritualities have in common with Christianity is pilgrimage—including both the belief in a sacred place and the spiritual process bound up in traveling there. As contemporary spiritualities borrow freely from all traditions, this could be the River Ganges in India, New York's Central Park (a former sacred forest of the Native Americans), Glastonbury in England (where, according to legend, St. Joseph of Arimathea brought the child Jesus), or the labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral, France. Glastonbury is shared, sometimes uneasily, by Christians and the followers of contemporary spiritualities (as well as by the thousands of people who come for the annual music festival). Believed by some to be the site of King Arthur's Avalon and his burial place, it also contains the ruins of a Benedictine abbey. Others believe that Glastonbury is a crossroads of ley lines (energy lines, often the lines of ancient roads) and a center of strong spiritual energies. Traditions are explored and validated as people's experiences meet their expectations. Glastonbury shows some interesting connections and crossovers—the "alternative" folk may borrow candles from the more liturgical Christian churches, which are then rediscovered by Christians who did not previously use candles but are seeking to make contact with the "alternative" folk.[26] The Chalice Well is popular with pilgrims of all religions and spiritualities (figure 15).

Glastonbury is not far from Celtic Wales, and was probably an historic Celtic center. Opposition to mainstream Christianity (including Roman Catholicism) may be expressed by a preference for Celtic Christianity, as being "purer, more spiritual, more in touch with nature and all other virtues valued at the present time. So the Celtic church is hailed as 'our native Christianity, before Roman Christianity was imposed on us,' and various means of 'recapturing' or 'reviving' the spirit of Celtic Christianity are sought."[27]

Could Celtic Saint Bridget have in fact been a pagan princess who was conveniently baptized as a Christian saint? Does it matter? Again, in contemporary spiritualities, it's one's experience that counts. But what about when the bending and blending of traditions goes as far as the Black Mass kits I saw in a Glastonbury shop window? Its defenders may say that, like

Ouija boards, the Black Mass kit is "just a bit of fun" and that Christians need to lighten up. But as we have seen with the occult, it's a weakness of self-guiding spiritualities that they offer no protection against things that really are evil.

A Real Knowledge?

This chapter is only a summary description of a very broad "family" of spiritualities with ancient roots that have reemerged in modern Western culture. Though highly individualistic, contemporary spiritualities' common themes—the human-cosmic relationship (microcosm-macrocosm), body and spirit, nature as revealing the spiritual realms and their inhabitants (angels), healing, especially through the arts and ritual (magic or otherwise)—are shared across cultures and centuries, from China to the Maya, from Africa to the Gnostics of Egypt, from Kabbalah to Sufism, and from pre-Christian times to the Renaissance Hermetic philosophers and the New Age. Of course, everywhere and at all times humankind is in relationship—easy or difficult—with the cosmos that is our home. We need the sun and the rain to grow crops. We fear natural disasters. We gaze up at the stars and wonder. We need to try to make sense of it all, to manage it. But why should the Maya and the Gnostics share a belief in multilayered heavens when there is no evidence of contact between Central America and the Near East until recent centuries? And why should the Africans as much as the ancient Greeks use dance, music, drama, and poetry as *ritual*? The relegation of the arts to "culture" or entertainment is a relatively recent Western phenomenon, but it should be recalled that the word "culture" comes from the Latin word *cultus*, which is both about cultivation of the land and *worship*—it is the word from which we get "cult."

Could these common themes in spiritual cosmology and the use of the arts represent a universal human knowledge? Of course, in a culture such as our own, one that has benefited so much from reason and science, it's hard to speak of such beliefs as knowledge when, at best, they seem to rely on intuitions. But the situation is further complicated by the fact that more Christians than we realize instinctively hold not dissimilar beliefs, *particularly those Christians who have the charism of healing* (see 1 Cor 12:9). They "get" the microcosm-macrocosm relationship. They're sensitive to the presence of angels—and demons. They're sensitive as well to the arts, in both their healing and their destructive power. They may be very reluctant to speak about all this, partly because no one who has the slightest instinct for self-protection is going to be in a hurry to declare "I'm a healer"

(look at how Jesus often hid from the crowds!), and partly because of the obvious accusation of pride—especially if they claim that their intuition is knowledge. But healers, whether Christian or not, often recognize each other. It's sometimes a look in the eyes, a *seeing*.

But in that case, what's the difference between the Christian healer and the non-Christian? What of this "knowledge," which, as we've seen in this chapter, has a dark side too? How does it fit with the Spirit's charisms of healing and the discernment of spirits, and with the ritual that is Christian worship? And what of cosmology? Christianity, at least in the West, doesn't say much about that now. But at one time it did.

Chapter 3
What Wisdom Knew

For images, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-3-what-wisdom-knew

So as Christians, what do we *know* that will enable us, when in conversation with spiritual but not religious people, to give "an account of the hope that is in [us . . .] with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15)? If we're honest, we're somewhat up against it. Given the strong natural and cosmological focus of contemporary spiritualities, in practice we'll probably find little from our everyday experience of being Christian that can speak to such spiritualities. While our practical charity and community sense can genuinely impress, the fact that ecological action doesn't tend to be high on the Christian list tends to reinforce the impression that Christianity is irrelevant *to the world*. And as far back as 1967, Lynn White blamed Christianity for the emerging environmental crisis on the grounds that ours was the most human-centered religion the world had ever known (because God gave humankind "dominion" over creation, Gen 1:26, 28).[1]

The challenge from people of nonreligious spiritualities may disturb us. Perhaps they're telling us that something's missing in *our* spiritual life. For example, we might feel a spiritual connection with nature but not find Christian words to express it. Or we might sense a connection between an art form such as dancing, and healing, but not find this in church. We fear there's something "not quite right" in what the neopagans are doing—but that they seem to have more fun than us!

Rather than come up with new responses, it would be easier and quicker just to go straight in and tell you what the early Church taught about the

cosmos, this spiritual knowledge which we've lost. But as we saw in the last chapter, there's so much speculation out there, from the valuable to the wacky to the positively harmful, that we need to be very clear about what the Christian tradition really is, rather than just making another contribution to the "alternative Jesus" industry. Later in the book we'll see that different teachings can have very different consequences for our lives and the rest of creation. So we need to begin by finding sure ways to recover lost traditions that truly take us deeper into the teaching of Jesus, not just "myths and endless genealogies" (1 Tim 1:4).

How to Remember What We've Forgotten

In the Catholic tradition, we actually have a tried and tested tool for recovering lost knowledge. In fact, it's almost a spirituality in itself. It's called "returning to the sources."[2] It was key to the reforming council of Vatican II, fifty years ago. It came about because Church leaders recognized that the world was changing so fast that it was getting harder and harder to communicate our faith meaningfully to people. Whole sectors of society were losing their Christian identity. It seemed people just couldn't believe any more. What we now call secularization was well underway in Europe. Even in the United States, still much more churchgoing than Europe, a large part of society is strongly secular, if not outright atheist, which has resulted in "culture wars." In the rest of the world, many people find Christianity just too Western—even though it originated in the Middle East.

But at the same time, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). We can't just change our faith to accommodate the world and its fashions that may, in any case, just be passing. So the solution is to return to the sources of our faith. When, back in the 1920s, theologians started working on this problem of modern unbelief, they found that at different periods the Church remembers parts of the apostles' teachings and forgets other bits. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Church has always hung on to the essentials. But some traditions that might have seemed secondary or unimportant at some points in history—such as teachings about the cosmos—suddenly become very much needed just when they've been all but forgotten.

At Vatican II, one of the great returns to the sources was praying with Scripture—for everyone, not just monks and nuns. For Catholics of the Roman Rite, the Mass readings were in Latin. Even though most people could read a translation in their missals, only a small amount of Scripture was actually being offered. There was very little from the Old Testament,

and the gospel readings were mostly taken from St. Matthew. Vatican II encouraged the proclamation of Scripture in the language of the people and instituted a three-year cycle of readings at Mass, which restored the ancient practice of the liturgical reading of almost all the Old and New Testaments, including all four gospels.

This wasn't just trying to turn back the clock. Rather, the council used the advances in literary scholarship and archeology to present the Scriptures in language that brought out their deepest meaning and in a way people could understand. The fruits of this have been more people praying with Scripture and applying it to their lives and a much closer relationship between Catholics and Protestants. Greater familiarity with the Old Testament has much improved the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Jewish people. The casual anti-Semitism of some Catholic cultures has been largely rooted out. Reform has brought about true repentance, turning us back to Christ and our neighbor.

On the other hand, reform also had its painful side. Many people felt that the beauty of the Mass was lost and replaced by a stream of words. The translations of Scripture and the liturgy, in an effort to make God's Word easily understandable, made it sound banal to some. For some people, it felt that the great depth of the Christian mystery had been taken away and replaced with "Christianity lite": the baby had been thrown out with the bathwater. In fact, we could say that this is another example of the Church forgetting as well as remembering. The recent retranslation of the Roman Rite aims at a "higher" language and a restoration of mystery, though again, some people feel that something has been lost!

Keeping in mind these considerations of forgetting and remembering, of loss and gain, we're going to look at the great lost tradition of Christian cosmology in the light of modern scholarship and connect it with what we already know about our faith. That reduces the risk of forgetting along with the remembering!

The Sources of Christian Cosmology

So what are the sources? There are five places we can find Christian cosmology: Scripture, apocryphal writings, the Church Fathers, the liturgy, and Christian art, all of which are the fruit of prayer.

1. Scripture

We're actually hearing a lot of teachings about the cosmos in the readings at church, but maybe we haven't noticed! It could be a verse that sounds

slightly strange and just grabs us for a second but may not seem very relevant to the "main message" of the reading. For example, in the book of Job we read that "the morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings/sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7, versions differ). In fact this is about angels, as we'll see. It's part of a whole section, near the end of a book about why bad things happen to good people, in which God speaks to Job of the mysteries of creation: the foundations of the earth, its measurements, the sources of the seas, and many other mysteries as well.

In Proverbs 8:22-31, Wisdom speaks about her presence with God, "when he established the heavens . . . when he drew a circle on the face of the deep" (8:27). Wisdom rejoiced (or danced) before him (8:30). Wisdom gives "unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world, and the activity of the elements," times, seasons, animals, spirits, and so on (Wis 7:17-20). We'll see more in chapter 5 about who or what Wisdom might actually be. Similar teaching about the cosmos is given in the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus; see 1:1-6).[3]

In the New Testament we read, "He who descended is the same one who also ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). This recalls a forgotten teaching that there are multiple, layered heavens, and, most important, that Jesus—*whose name means "The Lord saves" or "The Lord is my help"*—came to save and renew the whole creation, not just human beings. St. Paul says that "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19), which suggests that in completing our journey of discipleship, we will be God's ministers in renewing and healing creation. Perhaps this fulfills Jesus' command to "proclaim the good news to *the whole creation*" (Mark 16:15).

In fact, the entire Bible is framed by the relationship between God and the cosmos: in Genesis 1 and 2, God creates the cosmos; in Revelation 21, John sees a new heaven and a new earth. Creation and re-creation, and the hinge point is Christ, the God-Man.

2. Apocryphal Texts

Nowadays we use the term "apocrypha" (singular: "apocryphon") generally to describe early Jewish and Christian writings, including some called gospels and epistles, which are not in the Bible. These include writings by the Gnostics who broke away from the early Church, but far more apocrypha are just local Christian gospels, like the lost *Gospel According to the Hebrews* and the *Gospel According to the Egyptians*, or writings such as the *Epistle of the Apostles*. There's the Jewish *Book of Jubilees*, a rewriting of Genesis according to the cycle of temple feasts that contains much priestly lore. And there are the Jewish first and third books of Enoch and

the Christian second book of Enoch. There is the hybrid Jewish-Christian *Ascension of Isaiah*.

None of these ever claimed the authority of Scripture. Much Jewish and Christian apocrypha are probably best compared with the literature in Christian bookshops today. We know it's not Scripture and so it does not have the authority of God's Word. But insofar as it *agrees* with Scripture and deepens our understanding and living out of God's Word, it is good and useful. Some of what we find in the bookshop might help us a lot—but we might also find works that are obscure or even a bit crazy. Likewise the apocrypha!

The trouble is that, thanks to the Gnostics, all the Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic apocrypha have got jumbled up together. Many are widely available on the internet, often put there by people interested in alternative spiritualities, as evidence of an "Alternative Jesus."

In everyday speech, "apocryphal" means "not really true, but with an element of truth in it," like the stories often told about people we know. The apocrypha are full of stories that may be myths and legends—i.e., they tell deep truths but are not historical fact. Literally, though, apocrypha means "*things hidden away.*" Apocrypha, in their original sense, are spiritual teachings for mature believers, knowledge that not everyone is ready for. But because the Gnostics, who broke away from the early Church, claimed to have secret teachings that the Church was trying to hide (again, just like in the thrillers), this has tended to make *all* the apocrypha look a bit suspicious.

One of the great theologians of Vatican II, Cardinal Jean Daniélou, rediscovered an orthodox Christian tradition of knowledge (or *gnosis* in the original Greek of the New Testament). Knowledge is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:2). It does not consist of additional, secret, teachings, but rather a deepened understanding of what is already in Scripture. Much of this authentic *gnosis* is to be found in apocrypha, both Jewish and Christian, and can help us know the Scriptures more deeply. Pope Emeritus Benedict has used apocrypha in his preaching.[4]

Knowledge is often mentioned in the New Testament. St. Paul says that "the utterance of knowledge" is a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8) and celebrates "the depth of the riches and wisdom and *knowledge* of God. . . . For from him and through him and to him are *all things*" (Rom 11:33, 36). We tend to assume that "knowledge of God" means "knowing God." But Christian theologians have long realized that because God is infinite, he is beyond our understanding, so all we could ever know of God must be a share in God's knowledge of himself.[5] And because Paul includes in the same passage "all things," then sharing in God's knowledge should also be

a sharing in his knowledge of his creation: knowing creation as God knows it, and *therefore knowing it as it really is*. St. John writes, "You have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge or, you know all things. . . . His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true" (1 John 2:20, 27).

3. *The Church Fathers*

Broadly speaking, the fathers are Christian leaders and theologians of the first five centuries, such as St. Irenaeus, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, and St. Augustine, who helped resolve great crises of faith by finding clearer ways of talking about the faith passed down by the apostles. For example, there's plenty in the New Testament about there being one God, but also Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But how is God one and three? It took over three centuries—with many quarrels and splits—for the Church to be able to say "One God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity." It's thanks to the Church Fathers' prayer, thought, and hard work—always driven by a passionate desire to keep the Body of Christ united—that all Christians are now united in professing the Blessed Trinity.

The earliest Church Fathers are also important because they were so close in time to the first apostles. St. Irenaeus, the first bishop of Lyon, France, was born in the early second century and died a martyr around the year AD 202. He was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. From Irenaeus we know that the four canonical gospels were almost universally accepted across the Church from very early on. Irenaeus also passed down to us the "traditions of the presbyters." The presbyters, meaning "elders" and "priests," were the disciples of the apostles. The apostles taught them many of the oral teachings of Jesus and deeds which were not written down in the gospels. As we'll see, the teachings included interpretations of parables and sayings and teachings about the cosmos.

Until recently, many scholars have been rather skeptical about these oral traditions—and about much of what's in the gospels too! But now this skepticism is being questioned. Biblical scholar Richard Bauckham has shown how the New Testament appeals strongly to eyewitness testimony,[6] something that is crucial evidence to this day not only in historical research but also law. So Matthias was chosen to replace Judas because he had been with the others from the beginning and *witnessed* the risen Jesus (Acts 1:21-22). Minor differences in accounts of the resurrection can be explained by the appeal to different witnesses: in Matthew, Mary Magdalene "and the other Mary" went to see the tomb of Jesus on Easter morning (Matt 28:1), but Luke's witnesses are Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother

of James (Luke 24:9-10). And Paul says that he "received" that Christ appeared to Cephas (Peter), then the twelve, then "to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died" (1 Cor 15:3-6). The fact that some were still alive meant that Paul's hearers could check for themselves. That explains the odd moment, when, in the drama of the betrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane, St. John tells us that the servant whose ear Peter cut off was called Malchus (John 18:10). So what? Probably he was someone known to the community John was writing for, maybe even a disciple (after all, Jesus had miraculously restored his ear)—so they could *corroborate* the story with him, or with people who knew him. This, together with the sheer familiarity of sayings like "the other Mary" in Matthew, suggests a close-knit community. It also meant that no one would get away with making up stories. In Arab villages to this day, the community exercises informal control over storytelling. A certain amount of poetic license is fine, but the storyteller has to get the basic facts right and repeat the punch line verbatim. If not, someone will interrupt and correct him or her.[7]

In fact, an appeal to witnesses was so important in the early Church that the Gnostics did the same. Similarly, Irenaeus invokes the presbyters and apostles. But we have special reason to trust him. His great work, *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-Called*, better known as *Against the Heresies*, is written against the Gnostics, to whom he had lost many of his flock, including the wives of some of his clergy. While Irenaeus is often very critical, the Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi and since largely confirm Irenaeus's account of Gnostic beliefs. If he's truthful about his enemies, we can believe what he says about his friends.

This also means that because Irenaeus also invokes traditions from the Jewish apocrypha, 1 Enoch and Jubilees, we have good reason to accept the cosmological traditions contained in them as authentic, even though they're not books of the Bible.

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–220) was a Christian philosopher who was a master of courteous dialogue. In critical response to the currents of thought of his time, including Gnosticism, he argued that there was an authentic Christian gnosis. Like Irenaeus, he invoked a chain of witnesses, going right back to Peter, James, and John. He says that in Christianity there is "the knowledge and apprehension of things present, future, and past . . . which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles." These few were "James the righteous, John, and Peter . . . entrusted by the Lord after his resurrection with the knowledge. They imparted it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the Seventy, one of whom was Barnabas."[8] The "things present, future, and

past" are the subject of most of the apocrypha: the creation, the angels and the mystery of the fall, the heavens and what is to come. In other words, knowledge of the cosmos.

This may surprise us, but what Clement says makes a lot of sense. Peter, James, and John, his three witnesses, were the inner circle of the apostles: they alone witnessed the transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) and were with Jesus in his agony (Matt 26:37; Mark 14:33). It used to be thought that the Gnostics had taken all their teachings from Greek and Egyptian philosophy and myths, but now it's becoming clear that they distorted Christian knowledge that has become lost. Irenaeus plays down the idea of a "secret tradition" of mysteries, but he had good reason to, having experienced the damage done to his flock by the Gnostics and their distortions. But he makes clear that if such a tradition existed, the apostles would have delivered it to those to whom they were giving responsibility for the Church[9] (and by implication, not to ambitious spiritual elitists).

Why should this knowledge be hidden? We have to be ready for knowledge: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Knowledge acquired too early can disturb and harm us. Look at what happened to Adam and Eve when they ate from the tree of knowledge. We probably all know things we wish we didn't. And at the psychological and spiritual level, some knowledge can be too much for us. We wouldn't start someone enquiring about Christianity with the writings of St. John of the Cross, for example. He's very profound, but his emphasis on solitude can appear rather antisocial if we don't know the context. The rabbinic tradition says that certain biblical texts—such as Genesis 1, the first creation story—could be explained to a student only where s/he already understood their meaning—i.e., that s/he showed signs of having received the gift of knowledge.[10]

The insights of modern psychology tend to confirm the caution of the early Church. Cosmological speculations are associated with some forms of mental illness. Maybe, in extreme psychological distress, such speculation is a way of trying to make sense of a world that seems awful and threatening: but in fact, though they may contain real insights, these speculations are a distorted view of reality (see chap. 8). Even the true visions of Revelation are quite frightening in places and need to be taught with understanding and care. Even more so the apocryphal first book of Enoch.

This might explain Jesus' own approach. We commonly think of evangelization in terms of telling people about Jesus and Christianity and wonder why they run away. Jesus, a real artist of storytelling, started with parables. Literally a parable is a "thing thrown in the way." It's a story about everyday things like farming and fishing, but with a twist in the tale that challenges

people, even confuses them, but gets them ready for a change of heart, if they're ready for that road. It is only when Jesus is alone with the Twelve and the disciples (rather than the whole crowd) that he explains the meaning of the parables, "the secret/mystery of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11) or "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens"[11] (Matt 13:11). In Mark 4:11, Jesus calls the crowd "those *outside*" (*exo* in Greek, as in "exoskeleton"). So by implication, the Twelve and the disciples—i.e., the Church—are "those *inside*." This would be *eso* in Greek, from which comes "esoteric." This simply means "inner," but "esoteric" now has magical and occult connotations, thanks to the Gnostics. Yet for the true inner group, who are more ready (notwithstanding human fragility), Jesus wants us "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens."

This is, or should be, part of mystagogy, instruction we receive after receiving the Rites of Initiation, as we mature on our Christian journey. Clement of Alexandria called the teaching of the knowledge a second initiation, which made the true (rather than heretical) "Gnostic" the person who has the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is where Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy get their idea of second initiation in *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?*[12] But they're far from the truth of what this second initiation actually gave.

However much true knowledge we may possess, we still have to be careful. As St. Paul says, " 'all of us possess knowledge.' 'Knowledge' puffs up; but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1). All knowledge, without love, is worth nothing (1 Cor 13:2). A big problem of many individualistic spiritualities is that they become a kind of elitism. I become much more concerned with being able to do the lotus position perfectly in yoga than with my neighbor's needs. I may even use yoga (some forms of which can be good for our health) as a form of escapism.

Furthermore, knowledge is power. That was undoubtedly an attraction for the Gnostics. A share in God's knowledge can be abused. It gives us power, and power can be used to manipulate and abuse people, as we have seen from some of the terrible scandals in the Church. Knowledge can be used for magical purposes as well. In the Enoch tradition, the fallen angels taught knowledge to humankind, but taught it unwisely, *without wisdom*. They taught witchcraft to the women they had seduced and warfare to the men, as well as astrology and magic, with a view to deception (1 Enoch 7–8).

But according to the apocryphal book of Jubilees, the angels of God taught Adam and Eve knowledge—the knowledge of agriculture (Jubilees 3:15-16), through which they would benefit the land rather than destroying it. This was a wise knowledge of the cosmos: it was coming to know as God knows, in proportion to our capacity. The tree of knowledge caused

harm, because the serpent deceived Adam and Eve into snatching its fruit (Gen 3). As a result they were expelled for fear they would eat of the tree of life. Yet the tree of life is restored to humankind through Christ in Revelation (22:2)—the gift of true wisdom. *We might say that wisdom is knowledge given with love*. In the early Church, only those initiated Christians who showed themselves ready could be taught the knowledge, so that it would help them on their spiritual journey and in their love of neighbor and creation, rather than harming them and giving them too much power.

But isn't it dangerous and irresponsible to publish hidden Christian knowledge? Part of the reason I'm doing so is because I think it's necessary in response to the current crisis the Church and our culture are currently undergoing. The fact that until recently people happily accepted a presentation of Christianity that many now reject suggests that we need to deepen our approach to take account of what might be a real moment of growth in the human race's spiritual capacity. This has happened before in the Church. There is little or no reference to Mary's Assumption into heaven by the writers of the first two centuries of the Church, for example. They may have cloaked it in secrecy from unbelievers for fear they would identify Mary with pagan goddesses (though a surprising amount about the Assumption has been passed down in the arts—and the liturgy). Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption as a dogma to the whole world in 1950. St. Basil (ca. 330–379), who clarified the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, contrasts the teachings in Scripture with those that are passed down in the liturgy. Scriptural teachings give the essentials, but liturgy takes us deeper into the mystery with signs and gestures that are not found in Scripture, such as the Sign of the Cross and the blessing of the baptismal water. Also turning to the East to pray: "But there are few," says Basil, "who know that we are seeking our ancient homeland, the paradise which God planted in Eden, in the East." He explains that these traditions were handed down "silently and in mystery" in order to guard the sacred character of the mysteries and to prevent the "knowledge of dogma" from being scoffed at by the uninitiated.[13] This takes us to our next source.

4. The Liturgy

"For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and hindered those who were entering" (Luke 11:52), said Jesus to the lawyers. If there's a key, it suggests that knowledge dwells in a *place*. Just before this, Jesus had spoken of Zechariah being murdered between the altar and the sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem, the place where the *liturgy* was celebrated.

Jesus promised Peter the *keys* of the kingdom of the heavens[14] (Matt 16:19). Clement said the heretics (the Gnostics) had a false key that

wouldn't let them open the main door, but just the side door a fraction, by which they pierce a hole in the wall of the church.[15] To this day, the sanctuaries of many of the Eastern churches are separated by a screen from the rest of the church, and the high points of the liturgy are marked by opening of the doors and revealing of what is within—such as when the celebrant shows the Eucharist to the people.

The book of Revelation is strongly cosmological: John sees into the heavens, where there are cosmic battles and upheavals. And amid all this the heavenly liturgy is going on, with great canticles of praise (which have been incorporated into Evening Prayer in the Roman Rite, e.g., Rev 4:11; 11:17-18; 12:10-12) and incense (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). The earliest Christian liturgical document we have, the *Didache* ("Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"), gives thanks for "the life and *knowledge*" made known through Jesus.[16] Other early documents such as the *Apostolic Tradition* also contain cosmological tradition along with instructions for the liturgy.

From St. Basil's words about the liturgy and knowledge, it's clear he believed we had to belong to the Church to receive the knowledge. The liturgy, after all, is not just a show we could go to on our own for a bit of inspiration. Liturgy literally means the "work of the people," that is, the people of God, who are the Body of Christ. If we break off from the body, as the Gnostics and other heretics did, we also break off part of the truth from the whole. Heresy literally means "choosing": choosing a part in place of the whole. It's true that heretics have often felt driven out rather than having chosen to leave, and perhaps some of the clergy refused knowledge to people who were capable of receiving it. Nevertheless, in taking part of the truth as the whole, one inevitably distorts it. The knowledge of the angels becomes the distorted knowledge of the fallen angels, the demons, truth mixed with lies, that is quite capable of unbalancing us. But if we stay in the Body of the Church—however difficult and trying this can be at times—we do at least have a community descended by baptism from the eyewitnesses of Jesus, gathered by him in the prayer of the liturgy. The Church is an authoritative community with whom we can check what we know, rather than becoming "wandering stars" who have fallen out of the heavenly dance.

Of course, the history of the Church is also marked by action and reaction. Luther's insistence on "Scripture alone" made the Roman Catholic Church nervous of giving the laity direct access to the Bible in their own language for a long time. Given the difficulty of many Bible passages, this caution was not always misplaced, but we have come to understand that ignorance benefits no one, and now the general standards of literacy are such that almost everyone is capable of learning how to read Scripture and pray with it.

Action and reaction can also be a cause of forgetting. I would like to suggest that forgetting the cosmological tradition may have contributed to one of the biggest challenges faced by the Roman Catholic and Episcopal/Anglican Churches: how to celebrate liturgy. As I said earlier, reform of the liturgies of these churches has not always been greeted with enthusiasm. There is anger, boredom, and people simply giving up going to church. As a result, many different forms of the same liturgy may be "served up" in the same church building to try to meet different needs and desires, and members of the same parish may not feel able to attend each other's forms of the liturgy. We need only think of some of the tensions over the Ordinary (post–Vatican II) and Extraordinary (pre–Vatican II) forms of the Roman Rite in the Catholic Church. Such tension and internal disunity are not good for the churches and are hardly attractive to outsiders. "Mystery" in the liturgy is something particularly argued over. Is it a coincidence that we argue about what mystery means when the cosmological dimension of the liturgy is hardly ever mentioned? Do we know our own mystery? What would the liturgy look like if we did? We'll tackle all this in chapter 9.

5. The Arts

One of the glories of Christianity is the vast amount of art—painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and movement (such as the Sign of the Cross). All this is integral to the liturgy. The Church has also been a great patron of the arts beyond the liturgy. The cosmological teachings were presented in art from the earliest times. Many churches had and still have great images of Christ Pantocrator ("Ruler of All"), enthroned in glory on the cosmos (figure 1). Effectively, the art functions as a parable: by looking at it, we are moved and disturbed, and when we are ready we seek understanding. The art can also take us beyond the limits of words, and this seems especially true of cosmology. The visionary of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, perhaps St. Paul himself, was "caught up to the third heaven . . . into Paradise . . . and he heard things that cannot be told."[17] And while in the image of Christ Pantocrator we see Jesus in glory, we also see a cosmic human being: our vocation.

Of course, the Church has known moments when art was rejected or at least tightly reined in, such as the Iconoclast crisis of the eighth century and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This was about more than just "worshiping graven images." All art is made by human beings, and as such it can be harmful as well as beneficial. It always contains a dimension which defies analysis because art is partly a product of our unconscious. Here is a fundamental question of whether in making religious art we should just project a more-or-less wounded unconscious or enter into the mystery of

Christ and bear witness to his light in our lives. We'll explore this—and much Christian art—as we go deeper into the cosmological teachings.

The Cosmological Teachings of Early Christianity

So, we have five sure sources for getting back the lost Christian cosmological tradition: Scripture; the Jewish and Christian apocrypha; the witness of the Church Fathers; the liturgy; and the arts, all united by prayer. In the rest of this chapter we'll sketch out the main teachings and explore in the following chapters what they mean for us and the rest of creation.

The Cosmic Cross

In a much-loved passage of the Letter to the Ephesians (3:18-19), St. Paul prays that they "may have the power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." St. Irenaeus interprets this as a mystical reading of the crucifixion, whereby the Logos (Word of God) made visible to the world the imprint that he had already made on the universe: the heavens, the things under the earth, and the four cardinal points of the compass. St. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–ca. 395) says that Paul knew this "from the ineffable words during his initiation in the sanctuary of Paradise"—what the visionary of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 learned when he was taken up to the third heaven.[18]

Is this just Gregory's interpretation, or did Irenaeus's cosmic reading of the cross really come down from St. Paul? The *Acts of Peter* (second half of the second century) and the *Clementine Homilies*, a sort of Christian novel about the preaching of St. Peter (first to fourth centuries) have a sixfold image of the cross's dimensions: above, below, right and left, before and after.[19] All time and space.

This interpretation is intriguing as the Mishnah, the great corpus of Jewish law and oral tradition dating from ca. AD 200, forbade the asking of questions on "the four things": what is above, what is below, what was before, and what will be after.[20] Cosmological knowledge. Perhaps this ban recalls Deuteronomy 29:29, "the secret things belong to the LORD our God." But St. Paul, speaking of his own sharing of Christ's sufferings, says that he was called "to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints" (Col 1:25-26).

The Gnostic *Acts of John* distorted the Cosmic Cross tradition by having a cosmic cross of light *replace* the real crucifixion of Jesus, which it treats

as little more than an illusion.[21] But in 351 a great cross was seen in the sky over the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.[22] It hugely inspired artists, and in Ireland and the many other places reached by Irish missionaries, we find the Celtic Cross: a cross intersecting a circle (figure 2). The circle is an endless line, communicating that the mystery of the cross takes us to infinity.

We've probably been singing about the Cosmic Cross during Holy Week. Prudentius, a celebrated Christian poet of the fourth century, wrote the hymn *Vexilla Regis* ("Banners of the King"), in which we have the line, "The Cross shines forth in mystic glow." And in a hymn of the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook Abbey, England:

> O faithful Cross, you stand unmoved
> While ages run their course:
> Foundation of the universe,
> Creation's binding force.[23]

The Cosmic Cross is a radical teaching. It cuts right through any attempt to interpret the cross as God the Father punishing his Son as the only way to appease his anger, from which flow masochistic spiritualities. As the Dominican theologian Fr. Herbert McCabe famously said in one Good Friday sermon, "If God will not forgive us until his son has been tortured to death for us then God is a lot less forgiving than even we are sometimes."[24]

Nor does the Cosmic Cross avoid the terrible reality of suffering and evil. Rather, as we'll see, it goes to their very heart and offers us a healing process of transformation, even in the deepest darkness.

The Seven (and More) Heavens

St. Irenaeus teaches that the earth is surrounded by seven heavens, filled with angels. Each heaven corresponds to one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:2). So, in the first heaven is "the fear (i.e., awe) of that Spirit which gives light to the heavens." The second heaven is piety, the third, knowledge, and so on.[25] The visionary of 2 Corinthians 12 had been to the third heaven.

The idea of seven heavens was well known across the ancient world, being part of what's commonly called Ptolemaic astronomy, after Claudius Ptolemy (ca. AD 90–ca. AD 168), but is much older. The earth is at the center of the universe, surrounded by seven spheres corresponding to the seven major planets (of which the sun is the fourth). Beyond the planets are the fixed stars and the outlying planet called the *Primum Mobile* (First Moved).[26] The Greek philosopher Plato (428/427–348/347 BC), who might be called the founding father of Western philosophy, has in his dialogue

the *Timaeus* a cosmogony (creation myth) in which the Creator makes the Cosmic Soul, then divides it into two strips, joining the ends of each strip as circles by placing the one crosswise over the other. The outer circle is called "The Circle of the Same," while the inner circle, "The Circle of the Different," has seven concentric subdivisions, each with its own movement (figure 3).[27] It's commonly thought by scholars that Christians talked about the seven heavens and the Cosmic Cross as a way of putting Christianity in the Neoplatonic philosophical language popular at the time—just as we try to express Christianity in the language of our day. But as we'll see in the next chapter, some of Plato's ideas may go back to early Judaism.

Some early Christian mystics had the actual experience of ascending through the heavens. These journeys are recorded in apocrypha that the unknown writers attribute to Old Testament figures, perhaps sensing they had their "spirit," in the same way as John the Baptist "was" Elijah come back (Matt 17:10-13). The *Ascension of Isaiah* (late first century or first half of the second) begins with a Jewish legend of the martyrdom of Isaiah, who then ascends through seven heavens until in the seventh he is transfigured and becomes like an angel. He is taught about how Christ descended through the heavens to take flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary and disguised himself by taking the form of the angels of each heaven he passed through on the way to his incarnation. To enter each heaven he gave a password, except when entering the lowest heaven, nearest the earth, where he doesn't need to because the good and bad angels were too busy fighting to notice him! At Christ's ascension, the angels are astonished to see a human being, glorified, ascending through the heavens.[28] Irenaeus also knew this last tradition, which helps us understand an enigmatic phrase of the New Testament, "he was seen by angels" (1 Tim 3:16).

Another ascent through the heavens is the late first-century *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*, so called because it survives in Old Church Slavonic, the common language of East European Christians in the Middle Ages. This itself indicates how much these cosmological texts were valued by the Church into the medieval period. Scholars call it 2 Enoch to distinguish it from the Jewish apocryphon 1 Enoch. Enoch was of the seventh generation from Adam: "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him" (Gen 5:24). The Enoch apocrypha are about what happened when God took him and consist mostly of an extraordinary journey through the heavens, in which Enoch—because he is just, not because he's clever—is shown the secrets of the universe and comes to the House of God himself. The Letter of Jude mentions Enoch's journey (Jude 14), as does Irenaeus.[29] First Enoch is in fact included in the Ethiopian Orthodox Bible, so this was clearly a tradition very important to the first Christians.

In 2 Enoch, the Christian version, Enoch rises through the seven heavens. In the first he sees the angels that control the atmospheric elements—snow, rain, etc. In the second he sees the fallen angels; in the third, *paradise and hell* for humankind, and angels worshiping God; and so on, until in the seventh heaven Enoch is anointed and, like "Isaiah" in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, becomes as an angel.[30]

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, another early Christian work of Jewish inspiration, also mentions seven heavens. In the "Testament of Levi," the first heaven is sad, as it sees the misdeeds of humanity. The higher heavens contain angels who punish or intercede for humankind. In the seventh heaven is the heavenly liturgy.[31]

The *Epistle of the Apostles* (written sometime before AD 180), which firmly states the bodily resurrection of Jesus against the denials of the Gnostics, includes the teaching about the descent and ascent of Christ through the heavens. It also speaks of an eighth heaven: Jesus says to the disciples on Easter evening, "I came into being on the eighth day, which is the day of the Lord."[32] Jesus rose on the first day of the second week. Irenaeus says that according to the presbyters (the disciples of the apostles), the eighth heaven was paradise and the ninth heaven, the city.[33] This recalls the tradition of the nine orders of angels that we see in so much medieval art (figure 4). Also, the number eight has strong cosmic significance in many traditional cultures. The octagon is between the square (earth: four elements, four cardinal points, etc.) and the circle (heaven: infinite). So the Chinese *I-Ching* is founded on combinations of eight trigrams (combinations of three characters) and teaches that the ideal model of cosmic transformation is the octagon. One of the most common early Christian symbols is the eight-pointed star.

At first this can all seem rather bizarre. No surprise that the Gnostics wrote so much about multiple heavens too! The traditions sometimes seem to contradict each other as well, as the writers are far from agreeing about what's in each heaven. But like the different members of Christ's Body, the Church, the visions are complementary rather than contradictory. So for the third heaven, 2 Enoch confirms 2 Corinthians 12:3-4: it's paradise (and hell), tended by worshiping angels, which indicates the heavenly liturgy. For Irenaeus, the third heaven is the Spirit's gift of knowledge, and for the *Ascension of Isaiah* the memory of the world is not named there. The Talmud, the compendium of Jewish oral law compiled in ca. AD 400, says that the mills of manna are in the third heaven.[34] Put these together, and we have a knowledge beyond what this world can give. Perhaps that's why Paul's visionary heard there "unsaid words" that are not possible, physically or ethically (or perhaps both), for a person to utter. This knowledge beyond words is found in heaven *and in the prayed experience of the liturgy*. The

mills of manna would have an additional association, for Christians, with the Eucharist.[35]

These visions are in fact symbolic, as visionaries have often known about their experiences. They're like art, which *through* our senses, reveals realities—beautiful or terrifying—beyond our senses. And Christ's knowledge is a different way of knowing—one that asks us (like with art) to receive before we analyze. The cosmological teachings are in fact like parables, literally "things thrown in the way" to disturb us. They escape analysis. But by engaging with the symbols, allowing them to disturb and amaze us, we are opened to the truth they symbolize.

Actually, multiple heavens are widely attested in Scripture: "In the beginning God created the heaven*s* and the earth" (Gen 1:1). In the original Greek of St. Matthew's gospel, Jesus speaks of "the kingdom of the heaven*s*" (e.g., Matt 3:2; 13:11), a point completely lost in translation (usually "the kingdom of heaven"). In Ephesians 4:10, Jesus "ascended far above all the heavens." The Letter to the Hebrews says that "we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (4:14) and is "exalted above the heavens" (7:26).

So why did the tradition of the seven (and more) heavens disappear? The biggest objection to it is that it's bad science. Multiple heavens fitted very nicely to the old, earth-centered astronomy of Ptolemy. Yet once Copernicus discovered in the sixteenth century that the earth rotated around the sun, weren't the seven heavens around the earth just nonsense? In fact, this discovery was probably the biggest factor in Christian cosmological knowledge in general being forgotten. It suddenly looked out of date and just plain wrong compared with the new scientific discoveries.

But the seven heavens are not about *physical* realities any more than art is. They're about the *metaphysical*, that is, the deeper levels of reality that are beyond physical reality and underlie it. Our souls and the angels are other examples of nonphysical realities, but our experiences of the natural world point us toward them. Have you ever looked at a beautiful sunset and entered into a state of deep meditation? You were seeing into the depths of the reality of that sunset, into its metaphysical depths—that is, the heavens.

In fact, sunset is a particularly good example, because the sun doesn't really rise or set. That it's visible or invisible depends on where the earth is in its rotation. Nevertheless, day and night really exist and have a big effect on nature! It would be completely different for us if we lived on another planet or in another galaxy. So sunrise and sunset are examples of things that depend on our perspective *and* are really true. Likewise the heavens and our journey through them: it's the journey God leads us on, from where

we view the world, deeper into relationship with him, with our neighbor, and with the universe.

The fact that it's a cosmic journey confirms the ancient intuition that there is a microcosm-macrocosm link, i.e., that somehow the human person is mapped on the cosmos and vice versa. The knowledge of Jesus Christ takes this, and us, to a new level, because in Scripture the opening of the heavens are moments when truth is revealed, such as at Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 1:1), the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21), and John's many visions into the heavens in Revelation, where he experiences the heavenly liturgy, sees a cosmic battle, and beholds the Sanctuary of God. The rainbow around Christ's throne in Revelation 4:3 (figure 5) probably symbolizes the seven heavens: Christ is the first truly cosmic human being who has journeyed through the heavens and has overcome the cosmos (1 John 5:4). We'll explore this further in chapter 5, and in chapter 6 we will see what surprising solutions this teaching can bring to the all-too-frequent controversies over church music.

Angels and Stars

As we saw in the last chapter, angels are very popular in contemporary nonreligious spiritualities. They seem more comforting and approachable for many people than a God they feel is distant and intimidating. In the Bible the words for angel, the Hebrew *mal'ach* and the Greek *angelos*, don't primarily mean "spiritual being," but "messenger." All the prophets, then, are messengers of the Lord, Malachi ("my messenger") being a prime example, but also John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-3).

Nevertheless, messengers of God are also often nonhuman intelligent beings: in Judges 13, "the angel of the Lord" appears to Manoah's wife, who describes him to her husband as "a man of God" (a term also used of prophets, e.g., Elijah in 2 Kgs 1:9), but "his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring" (Judg 13:6). So angels aren't pretty fairies either! Angels figure prominently in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation as interpreters of visions. They also *serve the heavenly liturgy*. So the archangel Gabriel, who "stand[s] in the presence of God" appears to Zechariah at the Altar of Incense in the temple (Luke 1:8-19).

All the angel names ending in -el mean "of" or "to do with" *God*. So Gabriel means "Strength of God." Michael, chief of the heavenly army (Dan 11, Rev 12), means "Who Is Like God," and Raphael, the angel who appears in the book of Tobit, means "God Heals." First Enoch also has other archangels, such as Uriel ("Light of God"). The Roman (Western) Catholic tradition sticks to the three biblical archangels (Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael), while the Byzantine liturgy knows in addition Uriel, Selaphiel,

Jegudiel, and Barachiel,[36] making seven (one for each heaven?). Traces of these other angels survive in the West, too, often in stained-glass windows (figure 6) and folk traditions: Uriel is mentioned in a song from the Outer Hebrides Islands of Scotland (see chap. 6).

So the angels are not spiritual lone rangers but servants of God: the "multitude of the heavenly host" appearing to sing the birth of Christ (Luke 2:13, figure 7), speaking in dreams (e.g., to Jacob in Gen 31:11 and to Joseph in Matt 1:20; 2:13), ministering to Jesus after his temptations in the desert (Matt 4:11; Mark 1:13) and in his agony (Luke 22:43), and revealing his resurrection (Matt 28:2-3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4). Angels rescue Peter (Acts 5:19; 12:7), and to this day people have survived accidents with no other reasonable explanation than rescue angels that they or others have seen.[37]

Angels are sometimes described as stars. Hence the sons of the morning shouting for joy (Job 38:7). In the Christmas carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem" we sing about the angels: "O morning stars, together proclaim the wondrous birth." God calls each star by its name (Isa 40:25-26) and "the stars shone in their watches, and were glad; he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them" (Bar 3:34). In Revelation 1:20 the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. So the fallen star Wormwood (Rev 8:10-11) must refer to a fallen angel. Cherubs and stars are shown in this image of a Cosmic Cross in Ravenna, Italy (figure 8).

Angels are also mentioned a great deal in Gnostic texts. Again, this is because they belong to the Jewish and Christian cosmological traditions as the inhabitants of the heavens. In the Christian apocryphon *Ascension of Isaiah* there is a different type of angel in each heaven. The tradition of seven heavens may well be related to the seven angels and spirits of God in Revelation (Rev 1:4). In Revelation 4:5 they are lamps or torches of fire (as in Ps 104:4), perhaps because they are also stars. In some churches, particularly of the East, there are seven lamps burning in the sanctuary. In the Bible, the seraphim (literally, "burning ones"), cherubim, thrones, sovereignties, authorities, powers, or dominions (Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; cf. Eph 3:10) would make seven kinds of angels. Add the archangels and "ordinary" (perhaps guardian) angels, and we nine, as per the nine heavens according to the presbyters.

But all is not well in the angelic world. In Revelation 12:7, Michael and his angels are in a battle against the dragon and his angels. St. Paul tells us that in Jesus, God has "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him" (Col 2:15).[38] St. Paul warns, "Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14) and tells the Colossians not to be bullied into "worship of angels" (Col 2:18).

The apocryphal 1 Enoch explains this: "And many of the chiefs of the stars shall make errors in respect to the orders given them; they shall change their courses and functions and not appear at the seasons prescribed for them" (1 Enoch 80:6). The star Wormwood falls to earth in Revelation, recalling how the "sons of God" (another word for angels) had caused havoc by falling to earth to marry the daughters of men and begetting the warlike giants (Gen 6). We saw earlier how the fallen angels also taught black magic and warfare to humankind.

The ancients understood the movement of the stars as a cosmic music or dance (*musica mundana*). The Church Fathers in particular understood that where the angels/stars dance well (figure 7), they follow Christ, who restores humanity to their dance. This explains why the medieval cathedrals of France had Easter dances and why altar servers still dance in Spain.

As angels are so integral to the heavenly liturgy, the Angelic Dance sheds an important light on the significance of gesture in the liturgy and praying with our bodies in general—and why so many people find dance a deeply spiritual practice. We'll explore this further in chapter 7.

The Enoch tradition shows how angels/stars are given the job of ordering the elements and weather (1 Enoch 75). This explains why the *Benedicite* (Dan 3:35-68), sung at Morning Prayer on Sundays, tells the winds, rain, snow, and so on to praise the Lord. It is really telling their *angels* to praise him. If the angels/stars dance well, the cosmos will be ordered: the Greek *kosmos* actually means "order," so the cosmic dance is a dance that brings order and harmony to creation. According to a tradition of the presbyters, at midnight the whole creation—stars, trees, angels, and souls of the just—stops to sing the praises of the Lord. Those Christians who are able to are encouraged to participate in this cosmic liturgy by rising at midnight and praying.[39] Hence, Midnight Mass and the Easter Vigil.

This also suggests that in the world of the Bible, angels *as stars* influence the cosmos by their behavior, good or bad, and give honor or dishonor to God. This is the origin of the otherwise disturbing tradition of zodiacs and astrological clocks in European churches (e.g., Chartres, Münster, and Strasbourg cathedrals). Christ has overcome the principalities and powers, but we have still to fully conform our lives to Christ by completing our journey through the layers of reality called the heavens, where the angels live and move. We are still in battle. In chapter 8 we'll discover how the cosmological teachings of Christianity engage with the world's traditions of astrology and provide a surprising and radical response.

The first cosmological teaching of Christianity, the Cosmic Cross, is the key to all the others. And it engages with the greatest challenge to faith, the problem of evil.

Chapter 4
The Cosmic Cross

For images, go to
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-4-the-cosmic-cross

The Crisis of the Cross

Wherever we go in the world, if we see a cross on a building, it's pretty sure that it is (or was) a Christian place. The cross is the universal symbol of Christians. Yet it's a telling indicator of the depth of the current crisis in Christianity that Christians often struggle with the notion of the cross rather than glorying in it with St. Paul (see Gal 6:14), who preached "Christ crucified" as "a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23). So why are many Christians downplaying the cross, or at least not making it so prominent when we try to interest others in our faith? We may, drawing on Eastern Christianity, choose to emphasize the new life of the resurrection, but there was no resurrection without the cross.

The End of Sin?

This trouble over the cross is, I suggest, part of a deeper crisis with the whole notion of sin and repentance. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3) is one of the most ancient formulations of Christian belief about the cross. Yet over the past fifty years, it might be said that the "Christian West" has

lost a sense of sin. What, then, do we make of St. John the Baptist's and Jesus' calls to repentance? Although the use of the sacrament of penance (confession) is slowly increasing again, it is nothing like the long Saturday night queues that older Catholics remember. And the old "penal substitution" theory of the cross, that only by undergoing the horrific suffering of his passion could Christ appease his Father's anger at our sins, has rightly been rejected by Protestants and Catholics alike. But what do we replace it with?

Part of the challenge is that in little more than a century, life in the "Western" world has changed out of all recognition. I'm writing this overlooking a low-cost but comfortable housing estate. It was the site of our Catholic parish school, which in the late nineteenth century educated the children of Irish immigrants who lived a few streets away in severe poverty, sometimes two families to a room. Malnutrition and chronic illness were normal; family sizes were large, and infant mortality high. If one survived to adulthood, life expectancy was still low. *And there was no ready prospect of improvement*. The parish is still far from affluent, but it's wealthy compared with those times. The same story can be told about cities throughout the United States and Western Europe.

Small wonder, then, that the parishioners back in those days had great devotion to the two great crucifixes in our church. There was Jesus, suffering with them. Their one great consolation was that in heaven, every tear would be wiped away (see Rev 21:4). The more one suffered now, the greater would be the reward in heaven (see Matt 5:12). At least when people came to church, the beauty of the liturgy or the gentle rhythm of the rosary were great comforts. But this escape to a "heaven on earth" was, of course, only temporary.

But poverty brought with it many temptations to serious sins: alcohol abuse to seek a temporary escape and violence that could proceed from alcohol abuse or simply from pent-up rage, especially domestic violence against women. Some women resorted to backstreet abortions when they felt they were too poor, or too ill, to raise another child. People spoke little of these things outside the confessional.

Many people feel very angry with the Church for its general approach to sin and suffering in pre–Vatican II days. They believe it just made people feel guilty for things that weren't their fault, and that this was in fact just a psychology of repression. Add to this a culture of silence about "shameful" things and a predominant attitude of unquestioning obedience to hierarchy, and there was the perfect climate for clergy and religious to abuse their power, most horrifically in the abuse of children.

Society in general had a strong sense of "morality," that is, an accepted moral law, but this was not balanced with an understanding of what makes

people sin. So is it a surprise that even the predominantly comfortable, middle-class students who were active in the rebellions of the sixties railed against what they called "repression"?

At the same time, repression is a practical way of dealing with a situation that is unchangeable in the short term and immediately harmful. If our house is burning down, just sitting and crying could cost us our life. We need to get ourselves and the other people out as quickly as possible. So in the old days, when there wasn't any immediate prospect of improvement for the poor, clergy denounced violence and alcohol abuse, which were after all harmful for people's lives here and now, as well as for their eternal salvation. Because of social conditions, for all the work that many clergy, religious, and laypeople were doing behind the scenes to try to bring about social change, it would have been unrealistic to preach holiness to the poor as a way of improving our earthly life—it was about avoiding hell and minimizing purgatory.

Of course, today we'd see all this very differently. While not denying that theft, alcoholism, and domestic violence are wrong—indeed, the last of these is taken much more seriously today—we'd say that the poor back then were far more sinned against than sinning. They were victims of the *structural sins* of a society that was unjust and unfair, placing most of the wealth in the hands of a few while leaving the majority very poor. Surely what would really help these "poor sinners" would be decent housing, health care, just wages, and therapy to help them overcome traumas and addiction. We've moved from repression to integration.

Indeed, the use of therapy is one of the greatest shifts of our time. What began as the experiments of a few Central European doctors has now become normal. A basic introduction to psychology is essential now for ministerial training, and as a priest who hears confessions regularly (as well as being a sinner myself), I'm quite convinced that we sin because of our wounds. The longer a wound is unhealed, the more we'll go on confessing the same sins. Mental illness—anything from anxiety and depression to schizophrenia—may contribute to our behavior and perhaps totally mitigate our responsibility.

Is it surprising, then, that many people who would have gone to confession now go to a therapist? And because they understand *why* they do wrong, they can put it in perspective. They may not consider their sins as great or dangerous as previous generations, and therefore not in need of confessing. Those who do come to confession tend to seek some kind of therapeutic advice. But even if secular therapy is the new confession, there is still a desire to be forgiven—at least for the bigger things. We need only look at the success of the Oprah Winfrey Show.

The World

Another major shift is the Church's engagement with the world. At the reforming Second Vatican Council, the bishops acknowledged the gradual loss of faith in the Christian heartlands of Europe, with many thousands of people regarding Christianity or religion in general as irrelevant to their lives. This, together with the postwar "economic miracle," committed the Church not to a purely "otherworldly" salvation but to sharing in "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted."[1] This was part of a broader dynamic across the Christian churches, and has led to a remarkable engagement of Christians, led by the vision of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1).[2] We're committed to working alongside all people of goodwill, not just Christians.

It also means that we care more about our fellow Christians' well-being in this world. We already share in the resurrection through baptism (see Rom 6:11). So we may reasonably question whether an unbearable suffering—be it an abusive marriage or a totalitarian government—is to be endured as "our cross," or to be thrown off in the truly Christian revolution of the *Magnificat* and the Beatitudes.

But in spite of the great advances in the Church, the decline in Christian practice in many places, especially Europe and sectors of American society, seems only to have accelerated. Critics of Vatican II see the council as having contributed to an unintentional secularization of Christianity. Many Christians now believe that as long as we work to build a more just and fair world, it doesn't really matter so much whether we're churchgoing. And with the "makeover" of the old terrifying God who could send us to hell for our sins into a loving and merciful God who sent his Son because he loved the world (John 3:16) and wants all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4), probably no one will go to hell and everyone will be saved, even if they're atheists. The main reason to be a Christian is that it makes our life *in this world* better. Sin, the spirituality of patient suffering associated with the cross, and repentance all seem outmoded or at least a bit unclear. I for one am profoundly relieved I don't have to endure the "fire and brimstone" sermons my parents sat through—but do we preach with the same clarity and conviction? Is it a surprise that a significant number of young people turn to fundamentalist religion?

The Meaning of Repentance

We saw in the last chapter how the early Christians interpreted the cross as extending through the heavens and the earth and the four cardinal

points. But first, let's go right back to the beginning of Jesus' preaching. What did he really mean when he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt 4:17)?[3]

To most people, "repent" means being sorry for what we've done wrong. Often we may genuinely feel that we haven't really done anything that deserves to be called sin, and indeed that the idea of sin is just a way of making us feel guilty without any need—a way that religions have of controlling people. Repression, in other words.

But this hardly does justice to the word *metanoiein*, a word in the Greek New Testament that commonly translates "repent" (noun: *metanoia*). These literally mean "looking at things differently," or "having a change of heart." Behind *metanoia* are probably two Hebrew words. First there's *shuv*, "turning back," which suggests that a change of perspective and of heart might make one go back from an ill-chosen path. Second, there's *nicham*, which means "grief." If our sins come from our wounds, then to grieve over our wounds and what they make us do is the first step to healing—which is the same as the word for "salvation" in New Testament Greek.

But there's a still deeper meaning of *metanoia*. Remember Enoch from the last chapter? The Jewish apocryphon, commonly known as the first book of Enoch (1 Enoch), was very important to the first Christians. When God took Enoch up to the heavens, he saw the angels and the secrets of how the cosmos worked. "Enoch walked with God" (Gen 5:24), which quite clearly means that he was holy. Right at the beginning of 1 Enoch (1:2) it's made clear that he was shown the heavens because he was just, not because he was clever or learned, or knew rituals or meditation techniques.

So why does Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) say that although "Enoch pleased the Lord, and was taken up; *he was an example of repentance* to all generations" (Sir 44:16)? What did Enoch have to repent of? If we take apart the word *metanoia*, we find it's composed of the word, *meta*, which means "after," "with," or "around," and the root *noia*, which means "knowledge" or "mind." So knowing *after* an experience, knowing *with* it, from which we get *conscious* and *con-science* in English; and "knowing around." "Knowing around"? If we translate it as "the mind around," we get the mind which sur*rounds* the cosmos, in other words, the mind of God. Enoch received true knowledge or *gnosis*—he was given to know the creation as the Creator knows it.

And what Enoch was given to know might be called "trouble with angels." Enoch saw how the angels were responsible for ordering of the elements—the rain, the snow, and so on. By implication, this means that they had a knowledge far in excess of what humankind has. We can do a lot to change our natural environment, but we cannot prevent storms or droughts, still less hurricanes and earthquakes. Remember that the angels

were stars who were good as long as they kept to the orbit or "dance" determined for them by God. As soon as they broke out of step, they caused cosmic chaos. Then, rebelling against God, they fell to earth. These "sons of God," noticing that people's daughters were "fair" (Gen 6:2), seduced them, married them, and begot the giants, who caused such trouble and evil that finally God decided to put an end to the human race—which we see in the story of the Flood. What is told very briefly in Genesis 6 is greatly expanded on in the Enoch tradition. The fallen angels taught knowledge without wisdom, so that women acquired witchcraft and means of seduction and men the means to make weapons of war (1 Enoch 7–8). As biblical scholar Margaret Barker says, the most important feature of the theology of the Enoch tradition

> is its emphasis on the nature and the role of knowledge. All knowledge of the creation comes from God: used apart from God, it destroys everything. The myths in Enoch describe vividly what we should call technology, the production of weapons, communication, the formation of expectations and opinions, medicine, politics and even the world of fashion [. . .] and what happens when these are used in rebellion against God. The possession of such knowledge or wisdom eventually transforms a human being into a son of God; but the sons of God were those who fell (Genesis 6) and thought that they were entitled to rule the earth themselves. [. . .] We have kept the belief that we are sons of God as the result of baptism; we rarely emphasize what this actually means.[4]

We can share in the life of God through baptism or abuse spiritual or practical knowledge like the fallen angels did. Isaiah gives a very stark image of what can happen:

> The earth dries up and withers,
> the world languishes and withers;
> the heavens languish together with the earth.
> The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants;
> for they have transgressed the laws,
> violated the statutes,
> broken the everlasting covenant.
> Therefore a curse devours the earth,
> And its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;
> Therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled,
> And few people are left. (Isa 24:4-6)[5]

A perfect description of the effects of global warming—much of it caused by human beings exploiting the earth, cutting down too many trees,

emitting more gases from our factories and cars than the atmosphere can cope with. There are laws and limits, bonds and boundaries that govern the cosmos.[6] We have broken them. Most of the time this has been unconscious—we need more paper for a good project. We throw paper in the bin rather than recycling it because we're tired and can't be bothered. Or we exploit the world's resources, and the indigenous peoples, whose land the resources are on, are dispossessed. Maybe we don't know much about the actual consequences of our particular retail choices. *Perhaps we don't want to.* Perhaps in fact we're a bit greedy, having much more than we need. And why are we greedy? Because we fear that in the future we will not have enough. The wound of fear. Or because there's a hole in my life we're desperate to fill. Another wound.

The Meaning of Religion and the Sin of the World

So sin is *more serious* than we think because it affects the environment and other people far more than we realize (think of the damage to relationships through misunderstanding). It breaks the bonds of creation. At the same time, it's *less serious* than we think (in terms of our personal culpability) because it comes from our wounds, conscious or unconscious. *Our wounds and the cosmos* need to be healed, bound up. What is broken needs to be mended. That is the real meaning of the Latin word *religio*, from which we get religion: *re-ligio*, binding back together. And this is also the meaning of *atonement*: at-one-ment. As St. Paul says, perhaps quoting an early Christian hymn, God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself through Christ, "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20).

Now we see why St. John the Baptist said, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John's word for sin is *hamartia*, which literally means "falling short," as in "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Falling short—this is what happens when bonds are broken, like a beam which has broken and therefore no longer holds a structure together, so that the structure is then in danger of collapse. And the "sin" or "falling short" of the *world* (literally "the cosmos") in John is about the cosmic dimension of sin. The whole cosmos has fallen short through the fallen angels: the whole structure is damaged. Therefore certain evangelicals are quite right to insist on the connection between sin and suffering. We suffer—illness, injustice, sadness—*because of the cosmic sin.* The problem is that if we forget the cosmic nature of sin, we're turned in on ourselves. The result, as Margaret Barker says, is

> an overwhelming emphasis upon individual sin, and the burden of human guilt. Wounds have been inflicted, when the original intention was to heal and to restore an already afflicted creation.[7]

When the cosmological tradition of Christianity was forgotten at the end of the Middle Ages, this coincided with the discovery of the individual, all part of the new humanism of the Renaissance. In itself, this was far from bad: it paved the way for the science of psychology and the establishment of human rights. The problem is that by losing the cosmic, we got trapped in our heads and emotions. Human-centered religion eventually became a burden of intolerable guilt. The guilt we felt was not all our own. Having lost the cosmic meaning of sin, we'd forgotten that *sin is not primarily something we do, but something we fall into.* The Romantic poet and painter William Blake (1757–1827) was one of the first to rebel against the religion of guilt:

> I went to the Garden of Love,
> And saw what I never had seen;
> A Chapel was built in the midst,
> Where I used to play on the green.
>
> And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
> And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
> So I turned to the Garden of Love
> That so many sweet flowers bore.
>
> And I saw it was filled with graves,
> And tombstones where flowers should be;
> And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
> And binding with briars my joys & desires.[8]

An absolutist law of "Thou shalt not," which had forgotten nature and could never bring psychological integration, had replaced the holy wisdom of Christ. The law alone is impossible to keep, bringing death, not righteousness (Rom 7:10).

The Cross and History

Revolt, though, was not enough to make suffering and evil go away. History has shown us that the cross is the reality of the human condition. It's what happens when love—the fruit of true knowledge, binding the world together—confronts evil. In A. N. Wilson's novel *Winnie and Wolf*,[9] based on the true story of the relationship of Adolf Hitler and Winnie Wagner,

the daughter-in-law of composer Richard Wagner, we see the terrible consequences of willful ignorance and the ultimate price of true knowledge. Hitler ("Uncle Wolf") was attracted to Winnie through his fascination with Wagner's operas, which he used as a ready-made mythology for Nazism. When Hitler was an outsider, Winnie was a wealthy and well-connected comforter. She worshiped Hitler as savior of her opera house, of the German people, and perhaps of herself.

The mutual (self-) deception of Winnie and Wolf is being played out in society. When Hitler had come to power in 1933, writes the fictional narrator thirty years later, Germany was bankrupt, suffering hyperinflation and mass unemployment, and close to civil war. In six months Hitler halved unemployment through massive infrastructure investment and gave the German people back their pride. The Nazis' private army, the Brownshirt thugs, were not popular—polite people found them distasteful, and many considered their casual attacks on Jews deeply disquieting. But because life *seemed* a lot better overall, few people protested. They told themselves that the Brownshirts were problematic delinquents rather than true followers of the glorious leader (unlike themselves). Well-connected people like Winnie protested to Hitler, who pretended to take her seriously but then stepped up the attacks. Those—such as the narrator's father and brother, both Lutheran pastors—who openly condemned the persecution of the Jews and protected them and their synagogues with their own bodies, were insulted, attacked, and finally tortured and killed in concentration camps. Those few saw the situation as it really was. They saw the horrific future to which Hitler was leading them. They had the *wound* of knowledge that set them apart from their friends and cost them their lives. For all the limitations of their knowledge (see 1 Cor 13:9-10) they died for the truth—that only a civilization of love can bring true happiness and stability. Compared with the self-glorifying rhetoric of Hitler's nationalism, the words of these good Christians seemed weak to many people. To others, they were rebels: surely a good Christian was someone who was obedient to the authorities (Rom 13:1-7)? In fact, the Way of the Cross is a deeply subversive mixture of nonviolence and rebellion against injustice.

The world that Jesus was born into was difficult: the Jewish people under occupation, understandably longing for a Messiah who would free them from their Roman overlords. Jesus instead leads people on a journey of *metanoia*, a change of heart that comes from sharing God's knowledge. Those who follow him will discover surprising truths, both comforting and devastating, about themselves and society. Inner transformation through God's gift of unconditional love will be shown to be the only way to true freedom for everyone. Jesus will infuriate the religious authorities by accusing them of taking the key of knowledge without entering themselves,

and preventing those who wanted to enter (Luke 11:52). He'll lead people to the forgotten knowledge of the cosmos, which was probably how the Jerusalem temple was structured. He'll be put to death by the powerful few and abandoned by the many, who are disappointed that he's not a quick-fix political liberator. The cross will be Jesus' battle with the angels of Satan, the fallen angels who have taught humankind knowledge unwisely.

But Jesus defeats them by hanging on the tree of life (Acts 5:30; 10:39; Rev 22:2). Jesus' righteousness and *rightness*, forgiving the forces that put him to death and thus binding our broken cosmos back together, will be displayed in God's action: resurrection, the ancient hope of the Jewish people. A true *sacri-fice*, a making holy.

The resurrection of Jesus fulfills the book of Job: the just Job, passing through the dark night of suffering, asks God why. God speaks to him out of the whirlwind of his mental anguish (Job 38–41) and, like Jesus in his parables, asks Job questions rather than answers: where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth . . . where is the way to the dwelling of light . . . do you know the ordinances of the heavens? (Job 38:4, 19, 33), all of which Enoch is shown. Job feels ignorant. But he has now, through acknowledging his need for God in suffering, achieved *metanoia*. He has seen the whole creation from God's perspective.

The psychotherapist Miriam Greenspan, whom we encountered in chapter 2, sees grief exactly in these terms—a healing journey through greater awareness. But she also understands—and she's not a religious person—that we cannot do it all on our own, or even with support from a therapist, friends, and family. In the end, she says, we need to pray. "Perhaps help will come from an unexpected quarter."[10] Or as Jesus says, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

The Art of the Cross

So having recovered the original senses of sin and repentance, and seen how they're supported by historical reality and therapeutic practice, we can start to understand the Cosmic Cross.

First, the symbol of the cross is older than Christianity.[11] In Judaism both + and X were symbols for God: X is aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *and the silent letter*. X is also the first letter of the word *'Adonai*, "Lord." It may well be the mark to be placed on the forehead of the righteous who were to be spared destruction in Ezekiel 9.

It's also found in the works of the Greek philosopher Plato. Remember from chapter 3 that in his dialogue, the *Timaeus*, Plato wrote a cosmogony

(creation story), in which the soul of the cosmos is created in the form of two circles *crossing* each other in the form of an X. And at the end of Plato's *Republic*, at the judgment of the dead, there's a column of light with eight whorls (the fixed stars and the seven planets) attached around a central shaft, and the extremities of the sky are attached to its center, so that a side view would give a cross shape.[12] And the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus, wrote these words, which seem extraordinarily prophetic:

> the everlasting *Logos* (Word) of the eternal God . . . extending himself from the midst to its utmost bounds and from its extremities to the midst again. For the father who begot him constituted his word such a Bond of the Universe as nothing can break.[13]

Philo was undoubtedly drawing on Plato, which is why many scholars think that he was trying to reexpress the Jewish faith in the language of the fashionable Neoplatonic philosophy. But the parallels between Jewish temple cosmology and the thought of Pythagoras (inventor of the famous Theorem), who was a great inspiration to Plato, also give support to the Jewish (and Christian) belief that Greek thought was "Moses speaking Greek"—i.e., that the Greek philosophers were ultimately inspired by the Jewish tradition, and not the other way round (see chaps. 7 and 9).[14]

There was a great fresco of a cosmic cross in the Roman baths of Gaza in Palestine, probably bringing Platonic and Judaeo-Christian thought together. The sixth-century poet John of Gaza describes it as being a cross surrounded by three circles, beyond which it divides the sky into four parts, containing the sun, the moon, the cardinal points, hours, angels, elements, virtues, and eternity.[15] As it was circular, it may well have been in the dome above one of the pools: the experience of swimming underneath it would have been extraordinary.

Although the Gnostics tried to deny the reality of Jesus' suffering, seeing the cross in purely symbolic terms as a vision of a cross of light,[16] many early Christian writings understand the cross in terms of expansion into the cosmos, exactly as St. Irenaeus interpreted "the breadth and length and height and depth" found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians (3:18-19). The apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* (late first century/early second century) says that during the night before Easter, a great voice echoed through the sky, and the soldiers guarding Christ's tomb saw two men clothed in light descend from heaven. The great stone that sealed the tomb rolled aside by itself, and the two men entered the tomb. When they came out, they were so tall that their heads reached the sky, and they supported a third,

even taller figure. A cross followed them out, and a voice from the heavens asked the cross, "Have you preached to those who are asleep?" The cross answered, "Yes."[17]

In the *Acts of Peter*, which dates from the second half of the second century, Peter, at the moment he is being crucified (upside down), gives a cryptic explanation of the cross as the mystery of the whole creation:

> For the first man, whose image I bear [. . . fell] head downward [. . .] He, having been drawn down, he who cast his origin upon the earth, established the whole of the cosmic system, suspended after the manner of his calling, whereby he showed the right as the left and the left as the right and changed all signs of nature, to behold the ugly as beautiful and the really evil as good. Concerning this the Lord says in a mystery, "Unless you make the right as the left and the left as the right, and the top as the bottom and the front as the back, you shall not know the Kingdom."

What "the Lord says in a mystery" is probably what scholars call an *agraphon*, literally an "unwritten thing," a saying attributed to Jesus in Christian texts but not found in the canonical gospels.[18] It was probably part of "the secret/mystery of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11), "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt 13:11),[19] that Jesus taught to his closest followers, of whom Peter was one (see chap. 2). Peter is crucified upside down because Adam's fall turned creation upside down and the wrong way round. Peter understands the Word of God as "this upright tree on which I am crucified," the crossbeam is human nature, and the nail that holds the crossbeam to the upright—holds human nature to the word of God—as our conversion and *repentance*.[20]

The same teaching of Jesus is behind a passage in the C*lementine Homilies*, a sort of early Christian novel that centers largely around disputes between Simon Peter and the false Simon, the magician Simon Magus (see Acts 8:9-24). Peter describes how God is the heart of the universe:

> And the extensions taking their rise with Him, possess the nature of six infinites; of whom the one taking its rise with Him penetrates into the height above, another into the depth below, another to the right hand, another to the left, another in front, and another behind; to whom He Himself, looking as to a number that is equal on every side completes the world in six temporal intervals [i.e., the six days of creation], Himself being the rest, and having the infinite age to come as His image, being the beginning and the end. For in Him the six infinites end, and from Him they receive their extension to infinity.[21]

Note that Jesus dies on the cross on the sixth day of the week, the day of humankind's re-creation, and the Church is born from the wound in his side (John 19:35-37).

The mystery of the Cosmic Cross was also expressed in Christian art, newly inspired by the apparition of a great luminous cross over the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem on May 7, 351. At Ravenna, Italy, in the dome of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (sixth century), there's a gold cross on a blue background, surrounded by innumerable eight-pointed stars and the four, winged, living creatures of the Apocalypse (figure 1).

Nearby, at Sant'Apollinare in Classe (fifth century, figure 2), there's a cross in a starry-sky circle between heaven and earth. Here, the stars have six points—probably representing human beings who have completed the six-dimensioned journey of the cross and now share in the divine nature (figure 3). Heaven is completely golden and the earth is extraordinarily lush. The cross is bejeweled, and at the intersection of the four arms is the head of Christ. At the foot of the cross are the Latin words *Salus Mundi*, "salvation/healing of the world/cosmos." While Isaiah prophesied the destruction of the environment (24:4-6, above), he also said the trees would rejoice when the Lord conquered their enemies:

> The cypresses rejoice at you,
> The cedars of Lebanon, saying,
> "Since you were laid low,
> No hewer has come upon us." (Isa 14:8)

Irenaeus knew from his teacher Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, that the presbyters "who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related how they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times" that there would be extraordinary fertility, each vine having ten thousand shoots and each shoot ten thousand branches, each wheat yield ten thousand grains, and so on, and animals live in peace with human beings and with each other[22] (like the wolf and the lamb in Isa 11:6). This is the fruit of the cross, and the fruit of the repentance of those who will go by the Way of the Cross: a new heaven and new earth.

At the head of the cross of Sant'Apollinare (figure 3) is the Greek word *ICHTHYS*, "fish," the early Christian acronym for Christ. The Age of Pisces. Although for some spiritual people, the Age of Pisces has yielded to the Age of Aquarius, in Jungian psychology one symbolic value of the fish is what's contained in the unconscious.[23] And here the "fish" is above at the head, the heavenly end, of the cross. The unconscious has been raised up, made conscious of heaven. The grace of repentance has brought us, and

the whole universe, to a new awareness, a new knowledge, at the head of the Great Man Christ who stands, as in the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter*, between heaven and earth.

Note that another possible meaning of the six-pointed star is the Chi-Ro (XP, the first two letters of "Christ" in Greek, figure 4), one of the earliest Christian symbols and often stylized into a six-pointed star (figure 5). This suggests the many six-pointed stars in figure 3 are truly Christians—brothers and sisters of Christ by grace and adoption (see Rom 8:29). The six-pointed star also recalls, of course, the Star of David, the sign of the Jewish people who are our spiritual ancestors.

The most common Cosmic Cross, which never ceases to strike people, is the Celtic Cross, found all over Ireland and in the many places Irish missionaries went (figure 6). The cross extends to the circle of the infinite and pierces it, filling the cosmos and going beyond, which recalls Ephesians 4:10: "He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things." It's expressed in this hymn, adapted from the ancient Irish *St. Patrick's Breastplate*:

> Christ be near at *either hand*
> Christ *behind*, *before* me stand
> Christ with me where'er I go
> Christ *around* [i.e., the circle of heavenly protection], *above, below*.[24]

The Mystery of the Cross

So the first Christians had a strong tradition of the Cosmic Cross which may have originated in a teaching of Jesus. But the interpretations are quite diverse and therefore perhaps a bit confusing. What can we make of them?

First of all, what unites all the interpretations is *movement*: up, down, left, right, forward, back. This is understood in the *Acts of Peter* as turning fallen humankind the right way up/round and uniting human nature with God, to "become partakers in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4): divinization or *theosis*. In Philo's prophetic understanding, the expansion outward becomes reintegration of ourselves. The six directions are both "temporal intervals" and "infinites," suggesting that the cross is a process that takes time *and* takes us beyond the limits that previously imprisoned us. No longer "beside ourselves," we're made one with God, our neighbor, creation, and ourselves: *at-one-ment*.

How does this work out in the process of *metanoia*, real repentance, and indeed suffering? I suggest that this is about the healing that can come

through suffering and grief, *if we suffer and grieve in Christ*. Suffering and grief, in themselves, are bad, a fruit of the fall. But because they hurt us, we need, as individuals and communities, to go into what is causing the pain. The usual rhythms and resources of eating and sleeping, work and leisure *are no longer enough*. We need God: we need the crucified and risen Christ to free us from our prison of pain. This is how grief and suffering, even though the fruit of a fallen world, become the gateway to a deeper knowledge, a deeper awareness.

We expand *upward* beyond the insufficient visible world into a deeper perception of reality, being drawn up closer into God's view, God's *knowledge*, of his creation. As St. Paul says,

> So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:1-3)

The reason why this should particularly be an upward movement we'll explore further in the next chapter.

We expand *downward*, reclaiming our bodies, so often denied by a word- and computer-based culture. Physical exercise is often recommended for depression, although at the time we will almost certainly not feel like it. The Roman Catholic tradition has responded to Jesus' command to take up our cross and follow him (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27) through the devotion of the Way (or Stations) of the Cross. We physically follow Jesus on his way: we embody his—and our—journey. But if we forget the cosmic nature of sin—that sin is not primarily something we do, but something we fall into—then even the Way of the Cross risks becoming introspective and masochistic. Instead of being liberated from our inner prison, we're paralyzed in it.

The downward expansion is also one that goes into the earth, which in fact is also part of the journey to *left and right*. While we can read this as the reintegration of the intuitive, creative right brain with the rational, logical left brain, and even the integration of feminine and masculine, the left and right are even more basic than this. In a culture that celebrates the freedom of the individual, we risk being cut off from our neighbor. We're so set on our personal goals, the road ahead, that we fail to look from side to side. Part of the outward expansion of the cross is reconnecting with other people, whether it's deepening or repairing existing relationships, or noticing for the first time someone who has been pushed to the margins of our and society's consciousness. This is why Jesus—"God saves/heals"—was not just a spiritual teacher, but the founder of a community of love.

The past century has been very much a century of the cross for Christians: loss of faith in the Christian heartlands, two world wars, "culture wars," and painful inner conflicts in the churches. Yet through that we have expanded outward. The ecumenical movement, driven in part by Christian leaders uniting to fight poverty or working together as chaplains in wars, has taught us to recognize Christ in all those with whom we share a common baptism, without pretending that divisions are unimportant, learning to share what we have in common: to listen and repent.

The horror of the Holocaust gave us a new compassion for the Jews, and thus a new encounter with them. Missionaries who came face to face with the reality of other religions found not only negative elements in them but also teachings that connected with deep human yearnings and indeed with the teachings of Christ. Then huge advances in communications, as well as a rejection of nationalism and authoritarianism, gave a new consciousness of global suffering and poverty, of the world as one community. Christians became able to make common cause with all people of goodwill, whether of other churches, other religions, agnostics, or atheists.

All this has been an expanding journey of *metanoia*, of realizing the truth about the world we live in and about our previous ignorance and self-centeredness. But the biggest repentance has perhaps been the recovery of the cosmos. Suddenly we realized that our charity was so human centered that we were in fact destroying the ecosystem Adam and Eve were taught to care for. And in realizing this, and dying to an old way of behavior *that we were not fully responsible for because we were ignorant*, we are set free from the prison of our false selves and become our true selves, reconnected with the cosmos. We realize that we're actually part of a single living organism, as per the Gaia hypothesis (see chap. 1): by faith, we know it's a single creation. In Christ, we can make true sacri-fice, making holy our lives and our world. And so we're freed from destructive interpretations of the cross: we understand that Christ's At-one-ment is the re-ligion of binding back together the whole creation, making it new.

Now there are the final two movements of the cross: *in front* and *behind*. This is about time: our future and our past. We're anxious about the future because we don't know what's going to happen. Predictions of doom and gloom ring in our ears. We can be trapped by the past: personal memories; the memories of our family, community, and society; the unconscious of previous generations that we carry, their expectations, real or imagined. Perhaps that's what the shocking teaching of Jesus meant, "If anyone does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). We have to lose all that is false in order, as with Peter on the cross, to be

reconnected with our true origin: God himself. To say "Our Father" is the ultimate therapy.

A friend of mine, Steve Day, runs a nonreligious retreat center in the wild countryside of County Durham in the northeast of England. It's called *A Place to Be*. One day Steve wrote on the center's Facebook page:

> I may lose my Self sitting quiet, in a book, with music, making love or in the sea . . . mostly it happens walking alone in Nature . . . how do you lose your Self?[25]

Steve points to a deep Christian truth. In the words of St. Paul, probably an early Christian hymn,

> Christ Jesus [. . .] though he was in the form of God,
> did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
> being born in human likeness.
> And being found in human form, he humbled himself
> and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
> Therefore God also highly exalted him
> and gave him the name that is above every name. (Phil 2:6-9)

But this is the question: Is losing ourselves in the end a creative or destructive experience? Do we sit quietly in peace with the world or in lonely self-absorption? Does our reading integrate us or is it an escape into fantasy or darkness? Likewise our music—healing and uplifting or the accompaniment to a lost weekend? When we make love, are we fully committed to that person (in other words, are we life-giving?), or do we know in our hearts that we're using that person because this relationship might just be temporary and we haven't repented of our fear of past and future? In the sea and in nature, are we at one with angels of God who heal creation or with the dark and destructive fallen angels? Will we follow the true limits which are the God-given structure of the cosmos, the same structure that supports our journey to the infinite? Or will we break the limits and fall into a self-made prison?

At the center of the Cosmic Cross of Ravenna, we can just see in the central boss that there is the head of a man, surrounded by a rainbow (figure 3): the risen Lord of Revelation 4. He shows us that the movement of the cross is actually a journey into the heavens, to which we now turn.

Chapter 5
The Heavenly Journey

For images, go to
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-5-the-heavenly-journey

An Initiation

In 1932, archaeologists excavating the ancient city of Dura-Europos, a former Roman frontier city in Syria, discovered the oldest known Christian building in the world. They could be sure it dated from before AD 256, because in that year the leaders of Dura-Europos, in a last attempt to keep out the advancing Persians, built a wall that engulfed many of the city's buildings. It failed. But it succeeded in partially preserving many buildings, including a Christian house (figure 1).

Older Christian remains have been found in the Roman catacombs, but because many families were religiously quite mixed, symbols, such as vines, might be shared but have different meanings for different religions. But we know from the existence of a baptistery in the Dura-Europos house (figure 2) that what was outwardly an ordinary townhouse must have been dedicated to Christian use.

The Roman Empire officially tolerated Christianity in 313, after which it soon became the official religion. Before then Christians were often subject to persecution and martyrdom, so they had to practice their faith in secret. But once established as the state religion, Christianity perhaps inevitably adopted/baptized some more "secular" forms, including the basilica, or royal public building (often used as a law court), as the basic structure for

a church. So because the Dura-Europos house dates from before that time, we can be quite sure that it's not just a religious building decorated by the state for its own purposes of impressing and controlling people. Whatever art we find in the Dura-Europos baptistery has only Christian meaning.

The baptistery, which has now been rebuilt in Yale University's Gallery of Fine Arts, is art of high quality.[1] And its symbolism fits very well to the lost knowledge of Christianity, especially the teaching about the seven heavens (see chap. 3). This is confirmed if we compare the structure and decoration of the baptistery with the Rite of Baptism described in one of the earliest written liturgy and church order documents, the *Apostolic Tradition*,[2] which dates from between the late second century and early fifth at the very latest. The document's title suggests that whoever wrote or compiled it believed that it was a tradition that had its roots in the teaching of the apostles. From what we've seen from chapter 3 about the role and handing on of eyewitness testimony in the early Church, this is quite plausible.

Read in conjunction with the Dura-Europos baptistery, the ritual in the *Apostolic Tradition* is essentially a choreography that interacts with the images. It's also particularly relevant to us today, as the *Apostolic Tradition* was a major source for the restored Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) implemented by the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, before looking at the baptism ritual itself, we need to examine what the *Apostolic Tradition* says about the preparation of the candidates, as this provides important context.

Those preparing for initiation in the Christian mysteries are called catechumens, which literally means people coming to understand, *to know.* According to the *Apostolic Tradition*, the catechumens were normally to undergo a three-year period of instruction and probation ("hearing the word"). Was that just to avoid admitting imperial spies? In fact, the writers of the *Apostolic Tradition* seem to have had rather different concerns. When potential catechumens were first brought forward to "hear the word," they were not automatically accepted. Those who have "a devil" would first need to be purified. Pimps, artists who made idols, priests of idols, charioteers, and gladiators all had to cease their trade or be excluded. Soldiers could only be admitted on condition they did not take part in executions, and prostitutes were completely excluded. Although some other exclusions reflect the surrounding culture, this is the most striking:

> A magician shall not even be brought forward for consideration. An enchanter or an astrologer or diviner or interpreter of dreams or a charlatan or a maker of amulets, let them desist or let them be rejected.[3]

Remember that in 1 Enoch it was the fallen angels who had distorted the true knowledge and taught without wisdom, so that humankind learned magic from them. In the *Clementine Homilies* that we encountered in the last chapter, Simon Magus, the "false" Simon, was the sworn enemy of Simon Peter (see chap. 3). If such people got hold of the true knowledge, they could be very dangerous, like the fallen angels.

When the catechumens came to be admitted as candidates for baptism, their conduct was to be examined. As catechumens, had they honored the widows, visited the sick, and "fulfilled every good work"? Only if their sponsors could bear witness to this were they permitted to continue and hear the Gospel. Everything was being done to prevent the catechumens from selfishly using the church as a spiritual supermarket or, like Simon Magus, as a way of buying spiritual power (Acts 8:18-19). Instead, love and justice were set as the condition of knowledge. How could they ever understand the teaching of the Cosmic Cross if they had not first learned to reach out practically to their brothers and sisters in need? Ever since Enoch had been taken up because he was just, this true repentance had been the precondition for the mystical ascent into the deepest *metanoia*, the mind of God, to know creation as the Creator knew it.

The new candidates were to be set apart and hands laid on them daily to exorcise them. To us this may sound quite excessive and superstitious. But it's not to be compared with the rites carried out nowadays by licensed priests on those few people who are believed, with very serious reason, to be possessed. It would have been more akin to praying for the candidates' deliverance and protection from the malign influence of the fallen angels of Satan, who, as we've seen in previous chapters, have such destructive and subtle influence on the cosmos and its inhabitants. The catechumens would then, as now, have experienced struggles and inner conflicts, all the more as in becoming Christians they were at risk of persecution and death. In fact, the exorcisms are still, at least in theory, part of the RCIA.

The Easter Vigil then, as now, was held on the closest Saturday night to the Spring Equinox, when the night and the day are equal length, but the day is about to become longer: the triumph of the light. The candidates, having fasted, would kneel to pray. The bishop would bestow a final exorcism and breathe on their faces and seal their foreheads, ears, and noses with the Sign of the Cross. They would then keep vigil with the community all night and be instructed.

At cockcrow, the water (cold) was blessed. At the entrance to the baptistery, the candidates were instructed to undress. Completely naked, they renounced Satan before the bishop, who, assisted by a deacon, anointed them with the oil of exorcism. Then the bishop passed them to the elder standing

by the baptismal bath (figure 2). This journey of only a few feet would be like no other, and the nudity of the catechumens would enormously increase their sensitivity to their environment. Indeed, we can speak of an "altered state of consciousness." Above the candidates at Dura-Europos was a blue, star-covered ceiling. From their instruction in the gospels, they'd remember the journey of the Magi, who'd been led to the infant Christ by a star (Matt 2:1-12). Frescoes on the walls on either side showed Jesus healing a paralyzed man and walking on water.[4] But the fresco of the women walking to the tomb (figure 3) is especially striking because the tomb is *closed:* the mystery has not yet been revealed. So the catechumens, like the women, continue on their journey in order to *understand*. As they passed this fresco, they'd see on the tomb's upper corners two twelve-pointed stars. In that culture the immediate association would be with the zodiac. On the first star is the moon; on the second, the sun.

When the catechumens arrive in front of the arch itself, they see it has seven sections. This would remind them of the sevenfold rainbow—the sign of God's covenant to Noah when God promised that there would never be another Great Flood: death by water. It would remind them as well of the seven days of creation. The candidates would not yet know about the seven heavens. But they see too that the arch is supported by two pillars in the form of flowering trees and would have heard about the tree of knowledge and the tree of life in Genesis 3, though the description in Revelation 22 may well not have been read to them yet.[5]

Then a shock. The baptismal bath is shaped like a sarcophagus—a tomb. Baptism will be a symbolic death by water, even as the Great Flood was a real one. The catechumens will be "buried" in a tomb, for the wages of sin are death (Rom 6:23). But to reassure them, on the wall behind the bath/tomb are Adam and Eve, tiny figures like small children: St. Irenaeus, the source of so much teaching on Christian knowledge, said that Adam and Eve were still like little children in the garden, not fully formed.[6] So they were easily deceived—but the results were devastating. Similarly, our fall into the cosmic mystery of sin is often because we are immature or ignorant (lacking *knowledge*, the *noia* of *metanoia*) rather than calculating and malicious, but it can still have terrible consequences. To reassure the catechumens, the main fresco is Christ the Good Shepherd (figure 4), who has come to seek the lost sheep, not to punish it, but rather to restore it to the ninety-nine others. So the "death" of baptism will also be a very personal and human encounter with Christ, a moment of being restored to a great community from which the catechumen had been lost. According to one early interpretation, the ninety-nine others are the angels of God: when

humankind is restored to community with them, the angels themselves are complete, because a hundred is a round number.

The candidate climbs into the bath, and the deacon stands in the water with him/her. The baptizing minister asks him/her if he/she believes in the articles of the Creed. The articles are divided into three sections, according to each person of the Trinity, and for each section the candidate is immersed in the water.

When the newly baptized Christian rises up from the water, the stars are above his or her head, but much closer than before: for the first time he/she sees them as they really are (figures 4, 5), as *eight-pointed* stars. Re-created and risen to new life, he/she sees the cosmos as it really is. Now the elder (priest) anoints the new Christians with the oil of thanksgiving (probably enough that the oil pours all over their bodies). Then the bishop anoints them again with oil on the forehead, lays hands, and prays for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit. St. John wrote to his people, "You have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you have knowledge [or, you know all things]" (1 John 2:20).[7] The Greek *Christos* translates the Hebrew *Messiah*, meaning "anointed one." Sharing in Christ's resurrection, they are filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including knowledge. They will share in God's knowledge and become divine. The teaching in the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* that Jesus rose before he died[8] was really a muddle of the resurrection experience at baptism with its completion in our resurrection at the end of time. But the fact that this error could be made suggests how powerful an experience baptism was. The early Christian philosopher St. Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165) called it "regeneration" and "enlightenment."[9]

Then the bishop gives the new Christians the kiss of peace: they have been initiated into a community of unconditional love. As the sun rises, they can take part in the Eucharist for the first time.

Mystagogy

But at this stage, far from feeling they'd acquired knowledge, the new Christians would probably be experiencing a mixture of euphoria and utter bewilderment. There's no indication that they were told in advance about what initiation would actually consist of, so seeing the extraordinary space of the baptistery, stripping naked and being plunged three times in cold water in a tomb-like bath, and then seeing gold stars close up would be both frightening and exhilarating. Soon they'd have a lot of questions about

their experience. So in addition to being expected to advance in good works and continue in prayer, they'd undergo mystagogy, a "leading through the mysteries" they had experienced. The *Apostolic Tradition* says:

> But if there is any other matter which ought to be told, let the bishop impart it secretly to those who have received Holy Communion (or, "been baptized"). He shall not tell this to any but the faithful and only after they have first been baptized/received Holy Communion. This is the white stone of which John said that there is a new name written on it which no one knows except the one who receives it. (cf. Rev 2:17)[10]

Nowadays this is reflected in the new name taken at confirmation, and mystagogy is a "topping up" of catechesis and introduction to the spiritual life. But the words "no one knows except the one who receives it" indicate that this is the true Christian *gnosis*, the second initiation about which Clement of Alexandria speaks (see chap. 3). The initiation had been like a parable of the knowledge. Now they needed to hear the words that would answer the questions initiation had triggered in them and tell them who they really were.

The Starry Sky

Starry-sky ceilings are found in churches right up to the twentieth century. Enoch, when he was taken up to heaven, was carried by the winds. Then (1 Enoch 14:1–15:6)[11] he came to a wall like marble surrounded by tongues of fire. He passed through the tongues of fire into a house, which had a crystal floor, and "*the ceiling like the path of the stars* and lightnings." In spite of the fire, the house was both hot as fire and cold as ice, and completely empty; or, in another version of the text, "no pleasure of life [was] in it." Enoch has perhaps seen the abode of the fallen angels, and thus the emptiness and sorrow which comes from yielding to their temptations. He trembles and falls to his face, then sees a vision, and is taken to a second house, much like the last one, but far superior. There is a crystal throne on which the "Excellent and Glorious One" is seated, surrounded by myriads of fiery angels. He invites Enoch to come near to him "and to my holy Word." "And he lifted me up" (cf. John 3:14-15; 12:32).

Then God teaches him about the fallen angels and the giants who have caused such destruction on the earth (Gen 6) before angels take him on a tour of the heavens and he meets the angels responsible for the stars, the moon, the clouds, and the elements of the cosmos.[12] So walking to baptism under a starry-sky ceiling suggests an ascent into the heavens, a journey through the cosmos. It is a "God's eye view" of creation and its mysteries.

And by looking at the other symbols in the baptistery in the order the candidates see them, we will learn more about creation as God sees it.

The Twelve-Pointed Stars

We said that the two twelve-pointed stars (figure 3) represent the moon and the sun, respectively. So they could represent the Easter liturgy itself: the *Transitus Paschalis* or "Easter crossover" from the night of sin to the new day of Christ the Rising Sun, the True Light. And in Christ all time is redeemed: God's original creation of the sun and moon, which were "for signs and for seasons and for days and years" (Gen 1:14), is renewed.

Remember also from chapter 2 that stars are angels and angels are stars, influencing the cosmos for good or for ill depending on whether or not they follow the orbit or "dance" prescribed for them by God. So the two stars on the tomb must represent the two angels who were standing guard over the empty tomb of Jesus when the women arrived (Luke 24:4).

But why do the two stars have twelve points? In Judaism there are twelve tribes of Israel, named after the twelve patriarchs. And in Christianity, there are twelve apostles and twelve gates and foundations in the heavenly city (Rev 21:12-14). But it was Philo, a Jewish philosopher and contemporary of Jesus, who connected the twelve patriarchs with the zodiac, on the basis of Scripture. Joseph dreamed of the sun and moon and eleven stars (his father, mother, and brothers) all bowing down to him (Gen 37:11-12), from which Philo concludes that each patriarch is now a constellation of the zodiac, established and moving in the heavens. The names of the twelve patriarchs were engraved on the two stones of the ephod (great robe) of the High Priest of the temple, six on each (Exod 25:7; 28:9-10; cf. 1 Chr 29:2). The stones were *sohamim* in Hebrew: onyx or, according to Philo, emerald. He points out that the sky looks like an emerald, and that the stones also represent the zodiac divided into two hemispheres,[13] a scheme also followed by the neo-Pythagorean philosophers who lived a little after Philo.[14] Clement of Alexandria follows Philo's interpretation, to which he adds the twelve apostles of Jesus:[15] this is not mere convenience, because the twelve foundations of the heavenly city *are* the apostles (Rev 21:10-21), and each of the twelve gates has a jewel corresponding to those on the High Priest's robe, which represented the twelve tribes (Exod 28:17-21). The patriarchs and apostles have been raised up, restored to sharing the life of the stars/angels. The woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and her head crowned with twelve stars, as the Church, may represent this ascension as the universal possibility of all Christians (Rev 12:1-2). And the Catholic Church,

following the Vulgate (Latin) translation of Galatians 5:22-23, teaches that the Holy Spirit has twelve fruits.[16]

The Gnostics also had teachings about the number twelve: according to the Gnostic *Acts of John*, "the twelfth dances on high" and represents the human being and the Church[17] probably based on these Judaeo-Christian traditions. Of course, the number twelve is significant in many cultures from China to Egypt and Greece. There are twelve semitones in the Western musical scale, and according to modern science there are four fundamental particles divided into three generations.[18] We'll explore all this further, with Christian cosmology's radical response to astrology, in chapter 8.

The Two Trees

There are the two tree pillars that support the arch over the baptismal bath (figure 2). These pillars have exactly the same flowering tree design as those of the Torah niche in the nearby synagogue (figure 6). It seems likely that most of the Dura-Europos Christians had a Jewish background. So at their baptism they would see something familiar, yet different: the throne of the Torah being replaced by a bath/tomb.

In mystagogy, when they were taught about the seven heavens, the newly baptized would see the arch sections as not just the seven days of creation, but the heavens themselves, and perhaps recall that Job (26:11) had spoken about the pillars of heaven, which were also the two trees of Knowledge and Life, holding up the heavens. The tree of life is a universal symbol, from Sumer to Scandinavia and the Maya to India. To dialogue with these traditions is a Christian way to do what the psychologists call "re-membering"—putting back together, reintegration, the binding back together (re-ligion) of the Cosmic Cross, the true tree of life.

The Eight-Pointed Stars

But perhaps the most powerful, multifaceted symbol in the Dura-Europos baptistery is the eight-pointed star, which the initiates saw properly only when they rose to new life from the baptismal bath/tomb. In chapter 3 we saw how Easter was considered to be the eighth day, the first day of the second week (7 + 1). The octagon is a transformational symbol, being between square (earth) and circle (heaven). Many baptismal fonts are still octagonal (figure 7).

In the Roman Empire, the eight-pointed star was used as a symbol of the emperor's divinity, following the appearance of a comet in the sky after the death of Julius Caesar in 19/18 BC, shown on coins as an eight-pointed star.[19] The same symbol is also found in ancient Assyrian friezes, so it must

be very old. When the initiates, who of course lived in the Roman Empire, rose from the waters and saw that the stars were eight-pointed, they would immediately think "divinity"—though what this meant would be far from clear. Perhaps in their mystagogy it would be explained to them that in Judaism the mark X was a sign for the name of God, being the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph, which is silent. The + (the letter tau) was also a sign for God's name. For Christians, X on + could be God on the cross. The initiates of Jewish background might already have made this connection. St. Peter's famous teaching that God has granted Christians to "become partakers in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), literally, "sharers of divinity," is part of a letter that may well be a sermon to the newly baptized.

Plenty of other references to the number eight can be found in Scripture: the Ark, by which God saved Noah and his family from the Great Flood, contained eight people: Noah, his three sons and their wives (Gen 7:13). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preached eight Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12), according to the traditional numbering. There are eight notes in the Western musical scale. The Gnostics also took up the symbolism of eight: "The Eighth sings with us" and represents the four elements and their respective effects (e.g., fire: heat).[20]

And if we read the seven-sectioned arch and two trees of the Dura-Europos baptistery as one symbol, we can see them as a symbol of transition from the false tree of knowledge, journeying through the seven heavens to the tree of life, which is the eighth, or paradise, according to a tradition of the presbyters, the disciples of the apostles, related by Irenaeus.[21]

The Ninth

The Ninth, according to the same tradition, is the "city" (see Rev 21:2-27). In one version of the Christian apocryphon 2 Enoch, there are ten heavens, the ninth being the "secret mansions" of the constellations beyond the twelve groups of stars visible from earth.[22] Perhaps this is the origin of the tradition of the nine orders of angels. Also, if we look carefully at figure 5 again, we see that points of the eight-pointed stars inside the Dura-Europos baptistery arch are interspersed by dots, with another identical dot at the center, making a total of nine. Could the points be angels (as the whole star is an angel), revolving around the central dot which is God, with human beings as dots restored by divinization to the image of God—and to their place among the angels? In chapter 7 we'll explore the restoration of humankind to the dance of the angels. We will look at the stars in more detail in chapter 8.

Ascending to Integration

So with this understanding of the powerful symbolism of the Dura-Europos baptistery, let's look more deeply at the implications of the seven heavens teaching.

We saw in chapter 3 how early Christian mystics had ascended through the heavens and had different but complementary experiences of them. Irenaeus taught that each of the seven heavens corresponds to a gift of the Holy Spirit; though in another passage he says, "Nor are there a series of heavens."[23] But this was against the Gnostics' distortion of the authentic tradition. For them, the heavenly ascent was their escape route from the physical world. So desperate were they to get out that some had even invented a ritual of ascent to the eighth and ninth heavens, which may have been a distortion of a Christian chant (see chap. 9). Paul, though, had taught clearly that "he who descended is the same one who also ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10)—not escape them. And John had seen the risen Lord on his throne surrounded by a rainbow (Rev 4:3), which of course contains seven colors that *integrate* into white light—the pure light of divinity. *The heavenly ascent is a journey of integration, not of escape.* This is implied too by Irenaeus's teaching that the seven heavens correspond to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: we don't leave behind the Spirit's first gift—awe (what used to be called "the fear of the Lord") just because we've acquired the second gift (piety). Rather, the gifts *together* consolidate our faith and integrate us.

So we don't run away from our neighbor and creation and their needs: by ascending, we're graced to know and therefore to love and give more and better. The discovery that the earth is not the center of the universe, as I said in chapter 3, is about the journey God leads us on: from our (self-centered) view of the world into deeper relationship with him, our neighbor, and the universe. *The heavenly ascent is a journey deeper into reality.*

Seven Heavens, Seven Chakras?

With this in mind, let's compare the seven heavens with the Indian tradition of the seven chakras, which, as we saw in chapter 2, is popular in contemporary nonreligious spiritualities. *Chakra* means "wheel," so the seven chakras are seven "wheels" or energy channels between the top of the head and the base of the spine (figure 8). There are different schemes of chakras, but seven seems to be the most common. The teaching of the seven heavens as human spiritual journey confirms the widespread ancient

tradition of the microcosm-macrocosm connection—that is, that the human person is mapped on the cosmos, and the cosmos is mapped on us. So does each chakra correspond to a heaven?

Depending on our temperament, the whole idea of "energy channels" in different parts of our bodies can either be highly attractive or else just seem like bad science. Just what is this "energy"? If chakras really exist, why hasn't medical science found them yet? Perhaps an answer actually lies in our experience and the way we express it, often unconsciously, in everyday speech. I have "gut feelings." I need to get something "off my chest," or someone may be "on my back." They may be "stiff-necked" and I "can't stomach them." Rather than trying to rationalize and analyze everything, maybe we could be spared a lot of pain by just listening to our bodies—as doctors are always trying to get us to do!

But there's also a spiritual reason to be cautious of "chakra talk." If the chakras are real energy channels, for therapists or healers to intervene is necessarily risky, the spiritual equivalent of open-heart surgery. Isn't this just what the fallen angels did, distorting and abusing spiritual knowledge to do damage?

Table 1: The Seven Heavens (in descending order), the Seven Chakras, and the Icon Colors

Heavens	Talmud	Testament of Levi	2 Enoch	Ascension of Isaiah
7	God surrounded by the angels, the souls of the just and the souls to be sent to earth.	Glory of God and heavenly liturgy which earthly liturgy must imitate.	Enoch sees the Lord face to face. Archangel Michael anoints him and he becomes like an angel.	Marvelous light, nothing is hidden. Isaiah is transfigured and becomes like an angel. Below seventh is the air of the seventh.
6	Storehouses of snow, rain, hail, and dew.	Thrones and Powers (two ranks of angels)	The angels charged with the government of peoples.	Air of the sixth: Angels receive directions from the seventh. Isaiah sings with the angels. The light of the other heavens like darkness by comparison.
5	Angels who praise God.	Like the fourth, but angels before the Face of the Lord.	Watchers in mourning, persuaded by Enoch to resume their liturgical service.	Greater still. Angels praising God the Son.
4	Heavenly Jerusalem, the celestial temple where Archangel Michael offers the daily sacrifice.	Angels who intercede for humankind.	Movements of the sun and moon.	Distance between third and fourth heavens further than the firmament from the earth. Throne, angels of praise.
3	Mills for the *manna* (heavenly bread) which God prepares for his saints.	Like the second.	Paradise and hell for human beings.	Thrones, angels of praise (liturgy): memory of the world is not named here.
2	Firmament : sun, moon, stars.	Angels charged with punishing guilty angels and human beings.	Prisons of the rebel angels.	As far from the first as the sky is from the earth. Angels of praise.
1	Empty.	Sad: sees faults of human beings.	Angels control atmospheric elements.	Upper region: sky. Throne, angels of praise. Firmament: Sammaël & his powers in perpetual battle with Satan and his angels.

Irenaeus	The Seven Chakras	Icon colors
Wisdom. God lives above the seventh.	Crown/pituitary gland: inner wisdom, state of "beingness," knowledge, understanding, transcendent consciousness.	**PURPLE**, Divinity and royalty. Traditionally Mary robed in purple and scarlet at Annunciation, robe became the thread for the Veil of the Temple. NB also gold background as divine light.
Understanding.	Brow/third eye/pineal gland : clairvoyance, intuition, imagination.	**INDIGO**, **red** and **blue**. Passion, also Love-Wisdom. Virtue of Temperance. Autumn (so opposed to green).
Counsel.	Throat: communication, creativity.	**BLUE**, the sky, immateriality, transcendence, infinite depth and pure as the air.
Fortitude (courage).	Heart/sternum : love.	**GREEN**, **(blue** and **yellow)**: hot-cold, balanced colors. WATER, nature, SPRING. Tree of Jesse, Cross, wood of Life: symbol of Hope.
Knowledge.	Solar plexus: personal power, will, self-esteem.	**YELLOW**, sulfur, luciferian symbol. Betrayal (color of Judas), sadness. Not to be confused with divine gold.
Piety.	Sacrum: emotions and sexuality.	**ORANGE**, fruit of the knowledge of good and evil—apple and fig. Original sin, Blood of Christ—Passion.
Our world full of the awe of the Spirit.	Root: survival.	**SCARLET**, blood, fire. Like purple**,** sign of royalty.

But the solution is surely *true*, undistorted spiritual knowledge: the knowledge that Wisdom gives. The opposite of the tree of knowledge that caused death, it is the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the *healing* of the nations (Rev 22:2). With this true knowledge, we start to see the significance of Christ speaking of his body as a temple (John 2:21), and our bodies being temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). In table 1 we can see the seven chakras compared with the mystics' experiences of the heavens, St. Irenaeus's teachings, and the traditional colors of Eastern icons.[24] Each chakra has a color corresponding to it. Again, there are different systems of colors in the Indian tradition, and the enthusiastic adoption of chakras by many Western healers and spiritual practitioners does lie open to accusation of making arbitrary connections between the chakras and the colors of the rainbow. Nevertheless, as Anodea Judith points out in her book on the chakras (on which I draw for descriptions in table 1), the rainbow-color system is based on the idea of progression from the lowest frequency of light (red) to highest (violet). While she does admit that various Tantric texts describe the chakra colors differently, she thinks that "perhaps as we evolve, our chakra vibrations are changing frequency, and the colors are now becoming more aligned to the pure colors of the spectrum."[25]

This suggests the idea of the Gnostic ascent that leaves behind the lower frequencies as we attain the higher ones. Many New Age shops and websites make plentiful use of purple because it's the color of the crown chakra and divinity. *The desire for divinization:* but are our neighbor and creation being left behind? And what about the body?

It's true that some of the Christian mystics' ascents, particularly the *Ascension of Isaiah*, can be read as fleeing the world. But the apocryphal ascent tradition taken as a whole—*as part of the community* of the Church—corrects the impression of "holy escape," particularly Irenaeus's correspondence of the heavens with the gifts of the Spirit. Note that St. Dominic, who lived in the twelfth century and preached the Gospel to the body-despising Cathar Gnostics, is sometimes depicted with an eight-pointed star above the crown of his head, the "divine" chakra (figure 9).

In practice, many chakra-based healers seek more to help people harmonize their chakras than to neglect their lower ones, although the higher ones may need awakening. This is best explained as a story of a healing process. Let's suppose Angela is always suffering from throat infections. The doctor has examined her and ruled out anything serious. A friend suggests to Angela that her chakras may be out of alignment and recommends a healer. Although Angela's skeptical by temperament, she's so fed up with being chronically unwell that she decides to give it a go. Sophie, the healer, asks her to lie down and "listens" to Angela's body. She picks up strong

disturbance around the throat chakra (number 5). She gently asks Angela about the rest of her life. Starting to feel more comfortable (the treatment room is pleasant, with low lighting, soft colors, and burning incense), Angela admits to "some communication difficulties" with her husband. There's something she's unhappy about that she's not saying to him—and speech, of course, comes from the throat. Sophie will try to bring healing to the throat chakra and maybe also stimulate the brow chakra on the forehead, the place of insight. This is called the third eye in many traditional cultures, and in Christianity, it's the part of the body where we are confirmed, sealed with the Holy Spirit so that we may "know all things" (1 John 2:20).

Angela goes away and starts to think more about her communication problems with her husband. She finds her throat to be a bit better, though not completely healed. The next stage will be having a talk with her husband, which she may now feel able to do. Or she may first want another session with Sophie.

That is, of course, if all goes well. I've met people who have had negative experiences of the chakra healer entering into what is the person's inner self. It all goes back to that basic question we raised in chapter 2—where does the healer get his/her energy from? It doesn't mean, of course, that the Christian will necessarily be a better healer: he/she will need the gift of healing and to learn how to listen to the body, to listen to the client, and much else. But at least to be rooted in Christ is to be "in" the One who has defeated the fallen angels, the One who gives true wisdom in place of distorted, dangerous knowledge. Nevertheless, there are interesting correspondences in Angela's case between chakras and the gifts of the Spirit: the gift of counsel—advice—would help bring healing to her throat. And the brow chakra or third eye corresponds with the gift of understanding.

It is, though, important not to force connections: for example, it's not exactly obvious how the watchers in mourning in the fifth heaven in Enoch's ascent would help Angela (the watchers were angels mourning for the expulsion of the fallen angels: Enoch, no doubt with the corresponding gift of counsel, persuaded them to resume their service in the heavenly liturgy, 2 Enoch 18). Similarly, icon colors correspond better in some cases than others. Royal purple is the color of divinity, the color of the *crown* chakra and seventh heaven. In icons, Jesus is dressed in a purple robe, covered with a blue cloak—blue is the *pure* color of air, because Jesus' humanity is untainted by sin. Mary is shown in a blue robe (because she is untainted by sin) and with a purple cloak, divinized by grace (figures 10 and 11). But this purple is sometimes painted as royal red (red dye was less expensive than purple) which would be the lowest chakra and completely throw off the correspondence.

What's important to remember is that the heavenly ascents were Spirit-led personal experiences. Though both taken up to heaven in the Spirit, rather than forcing their way up, "Isaiah's" experience was different from "Enoch's." Ours is an incarnational faith: God meets us where we are, in our own personal life story and experience. So if we look at the correspondences around the heavens, it's better to do it in prayer; to see where we make connections and then pray over them and see what the Spirit tells us. For example, I'm particularly attracted by the third heaven, to which Paul's visionary was taken (2 Cor 12:2): the gift of knowledge, the place of the liturgy, of the mills of manna (which makes us think of the Eucharist). Also the solar plexus (diaphragm), associated with personal power, will, and self-esteem. I want knowledge? I want to ascend the heavens? The color is yellow—the color of sulfur, of *Luci*fer, the fallen angel of *light* who wanted power and betrayed true knowledge. But being taken up by the *Spirit's* initiative, we're given true knowledge and real self-esteem, for we know we're made in God's image and likeness and are being restored to it. We will surely find other connections across the "heavenly journeys" by which the Spirit may lead us deeper on our journey into the heavens.

The Old Name for Purgatory?

The tradition of multiple heavens was handed down at least until the time of the great Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Paradise has nine heavens, each corresponding to a planet according to Ptolemy's scheme, plus the heaven of the fixed stars and the *Primum Mobile* ("First Moved"). In the different heavens, *understanding* is given to Dante of different questions (such as what happens to good unbelievers when they die). Dante's *Inferno* has seven circles in the upper hell and two in the lower hell, making a total of nine—the mirror image of the heavens. But especially interesting is his description of purgatory as a mountain to climb, recalling the idea of a heavenly ascent. The mountain has seven cornices, each corresponding to one of the Seven Deadly Sins—so, for example, those guilty of sinful anger are in the third cornice. All those in purgatory are there to *repent*—and as we know from the last chapter, repentance translates *metanoia*, which is a change of heart and ultimately a sharing in God's own knowledge of his creation.

I raise this because since the sixteenth century, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory has been a subject of disagreement among Christians. Purgatory was rejected by the Protestant Reformers because it's not explicitly taught

in Scripture. But this dispute arose *just at the time when the old cosmological tradition started to be abandoned or forgotten.*

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "all who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."[26] Ephesians 2:5 makes it clear that "by grace you have been saved," on which all Christians agree. But also, "we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. . . . See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:1). And in Philippians 2:12-13, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling . . . for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." "Working out" our salvation is nothing less than being sanctified: hence Paul prays that "the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23).

So the question arises of what happens to us if we're not completely sanctified at the moment of our death. Purgatory simply means "cleansing" and as such could be called a "deduction of hope" from Scripture, that whatever is incomplete in our sanctification when we die will be lovingly completed by God in the next life so that we will be ready to be with him and all the blessed in heaven. Indeed, praying for the dead became a common theme in preaching from the fourth century onward. St. Monica famously asked her son St. Augustine to "remember me at the altar of the Lord." And St. Caesarius of Arles described the fire on the Day of Judgment "which will test what sort of work each one has done" (1 Cor 3:13), as a "cleansing [*purgatorius*] fire." It is from *purgatorius* we get "purgatory."

Theological speculation about purgatory increased during the Middle Ages. Later traditions about terrible torments in the "fires of purgatory" are a dangerous, terrifying corruption that have no scriptural foundation. In fact, public speculation in sermons about what "happens" in purgatory was forbidden in 1563 by the reforming Council of Trent.[27] And the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says nothing of purgatory as punishment.

I'd like to suggest that the early Christian teaching about the journey through the heavens may be both the origin of the doctrine of purgatory and perhaps a better way of talking about the process of repentance and sanctification that we need to go through to be made perfect (see Heb 5:9) and come to be with the risen Lord. The process of rising through the heavens is a journey progressively deeper into reality *and therefore* a journey of psychological integration by the gifts of the Spirit. It reconnects us with God, ourselves, each other, and the cosmos. The bonds that have

been broken are healed. As our behavior changes, as the anointing of the Spirit at confirmation is progressively activated in the *metanoia* of spiritual and psychological maturing, we can realize our vocation as microcosm. This was the original vocation of Adam: to till the earth and keep it (Gen 2:15) rather than destroying it. As we start to live this, the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1; 2 Pet 3:13) are gradually realized. Whatever in our personal journey of repentance, *metanoia*, is incomplete at the moment of our death is completed after. Hence, purgatory. I suggest that "completing the heavenly journey" or "passage through the heavens" might be a better way to speak of what happens after we die.

I can also say from my own experience how deeply comforted I was by the knowledge, when my father died after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease, that his soul had passed not "up" or "out" there, but deeper into the heavens *which are the depths of the present*. Perhaps this sheds some light on the experience of many people in the early stages of bereavement, that their loved one is "there," "present," and "talking to them." Also, because I believe that the doctrine of purgatory is really about the journey through the heavens, then if my father is still completing his journey, I don't believe he passed to some dark or miserable place. Rather, I believe he passed to a journey of rising more and more into the light, and that through the prayers of Christ's Body, the Church, his journey may be speeded up. St. Paul's teaching "concerning those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13) is often read at funerals. How sad, then, when even deeply devout Christians are not healthily grieving but inconsolably fearful, *without* hope, because of the distorted traditions that they have been taught about purgatory or hell. Christ came to set us free!

Indeed, bereavement, lived in faith, may deepen our heavenly journey into reality. A friend of mine, Michael, lost his sister to cancer. She died in her early forties. She had been surrounded with healing prayer to help her make the final part of her earthly journey. Michael said that grieving had been an extraordinary spiritual journey that had made him reassess what he was doing with his life.

When Úna, a former student of Newcastle University where I minister, was killed by an avalanche while climbing, we decided to have a week of formal mourning. Úna was much loved: her brilliance, sense of fun, and inexhaustible generosity were rooted in a deep faith. For many of the students, this was their first real experience of bereavement—and losing someone their own age as well. During the week of mourning, we experienced a sense of Úna's faith and love of life sustaining us—and were struck by the quality and depth of our encounters with each other. Why didn't

we live like this all the time? I remember sensing that Úna, like Jesus, had passed through a curtain or "the veil" (Heb 6:19-20; 10:19-20), between the visible and invisible worlds, the earth and the heavens. Our need for comfort in our grief had opened us to receive from that invisible world. We were stretched on the Cosmic Cross deeper into reality.

The Cosmic Christ

Until the fifteenth century, Christ was often portrayed surrounded by, or seated on, the rainbow of the heavens (Rev 4:3; cf. Eph 4:10), such as in Hans Memling's *Last Judgment* (1466–1473, figure 12). In the transfiguration mosaic in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, Egypt (figure 13), Jesus is surrounded by a body halo known as a mandorla (literally, "almond," because of its shape). Its color is a bluish black, to show that everything is darkness compared with the divine light. The heavens are depicted in the eight rays. Seven of these are white, but the eighth, pointing upward from the crown of Jesus' head to connect with a heavenly cross, is golden: the transformation of earth to heaven. The body halo also recalls the aura, which we encountered in chapter 2: the "energy body" which is said by some to surround the physical body and to indicate the spiritual state of the person. Perhaps some early Christians could see this. In the case of Jesus, it would show that he was the one who had integrated the seven heavens of this life's journey to the point of ascent to the eighth, the day of resurrection. He is truly the Cosmic Christ.

In a sixth-century mosaic at San Vitale, Ravenna (figure 14), Christ is enthroned on a globe, representing the cosmos, because he has overcome the cosmos (John 16:33), i.e., the destructive forces of the fallen angels, the fallen principalities and powers. And all around him is greenery, nature in full bloom: the "tradition of the presybters" that the earth will be extraordinarily fruitful when Christ comes again.

When we first see this icon, we see a man surrounded by the heavens. By faith we know that it is Christ, the Son of God made man. As we look more, we see that he is looking at us. And as we let him look on us, we are gradually transformed. We start to see ourselves, Christ-ians, anointed ones, anointed so that Christ's healing of the whole cosmos might flow through us.

And yet we still struggle against the principalities and powers (Eph 6:12). The whole of creation is groaning in labor, waiting to be set free, and we too live in hope "for the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:21-23). I emphasized the transforming nature of the cross in chapter 4: there's no value in a religion that is always Lent and never Easter, because if Christ is

not raised, then our faith is in vain (1 Cor 15:17). But at the same time, we have to be careful of a certain kind of "First World" Christianity I alluded to in chapter 4: those who are Christians because it makes their life *in this world* better. Roch A. Kereszty says,

> For them belief in eternal life seems to be just a "last straw" to hang onto for consolation after all efforts for prolonging a fruitful life on earth have proved useless. Eternal life, heaven, and hell appear much less real for the average First World Catholic than life in this world. [. . .] While we have to promote as much as possible "a civilization of love," Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of heaven will not arrive in its fullness by our efforts (even if these efforts are helped by God's grace) but by the gracious gift of the Father.[28]

Being a Christian *only* to make our lives in this world better cannot equip us to deal with suffering, setback, or failure, let alone prejudice or persecution. It's far too close to the "instant spiritualities" that offer immediate use of healing energies, with little thought for self-knowledge of true repentance, *metanoia*, which is needed if we are to do good rather than harm. *Metanoia* is a cosmic battle in which we are Christ's sacrificial ("holy-making") priests, in constant need of his protection. And this battle will take much longer than a single human life. Wonderful moments—such as an evening with good friends when we lose sense of time—are foretastes of heaven, the eternal now. But the Lord will come only when the entire cosmos is ready.

If this is discouraging, if it makes the glorious images of the Cosmic Christ too far away—then the Spirit's highest gift, Wisdom, which corresponds to the seventh heaven, is perhaps what we need. According to a popular prayer,

> God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
> The courage to change the things I can,
> And *wisdom* to know the difference.

But isn't it about time we answered this question: just who or what is Wisdom?

. . . And the Cosmic Woman

There's a Christian mystical tradition about Wisdom known as "sophiological" or "sophianic." The poet Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900) had three

visions of Wisdom, "as a beautiful and mysterious female figure [. . .] the feminine/receptive principle in both God and creation," with, in Solovyov's words, "eyes full of an azure [blue] fire" that embraced the whole creation.[29] In one of these visions, Wisdom appeared when the doors of the iconostasis (sanctuary screen) of the church opened during the liturgy.

Wisdom is feminine in Hebrew (*ḥokhmah*) and Greek (*sophia*); and Spirit is also feminine in Hebrew (*ruaḥ*). The text we've often quoted in Proverbs 8, about Wisdom rejoicing/playing/dancing before God as he created the world is expanded in the book of Wisdom. "The spirit of Wisdom" is given to the writer, who received from God *knowledge* of what exists: the structure of the world, the activity (*energeia*, literally "energy") of its elements, the times, the solstices, the seasons and the constellations, animals, spirits, plants, "both what is secret and what is manifest." In Wisdom there is an "intelligent, holy" spirit who is "a breath of the power of God" and a "pure emanation of his glory," a "reflection of eternal light," a "spotless mirror of the working of God," and an "image of his goodness." She is one but does all things (Wis 7:22-27).

In Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Wisdom comes from the Lord God and is with him forever, knowing the waves of the sea, the height of heaven, the breadth of the earth and the abyss, and is an "eternal foundation" among the human race (Sir 1:1-4, 15; see also 24:2-6). So she will glory in the midst of her people and open her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, i.e., the liturgy. She ministered before the Creator in the holy tabernacle—where Solovyov saw her. She grew tall as trees and was fragrant like incense in the tabernacle (Sir 24:1-17).

Theologians struggle to make sense of all this: is she Mary (Valentin Tomberg, Hans Urs von Balthasar)? Is she the "being of God" and, as "creaturely" Sophia, the divine foundation of creation (Sergei Bulgakov)? Is she a new unity of Christ and the Church (Louis Bouyer)? Is she creation's divinization, in which we're called to share (Stratford Caldecott)?[30]

Sophiology is sometimes regarded as heresy, particularly in the Orthodox Church: Scripture makes it perfectly clear that *Jesus* is the Wisdom from on high (1 Cor 1:24). Surely all these hankerings after a divine feminine come from reading too much into the gender of Wisdom and Spirit in Hebrew? It was the Gnostics (such as in the *Pistis Sophia*) who had made a goddess out of Wisdom.

But we've already seen that the Gnostics tended to distort Christian teachings rather than invent new ones. As Margaret Barker says, if God made humankind both male and female in his image (Gen 1:27), then "the image of God in human terms had to be both male and female."[31] We can't just say that Jesus is Wisdom, period, because he also said, "Whoever has

seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). But Jesus is the Son, not the Father. In him we also see the Spirit, because Father, Son, and Spirit are the One God: and Jesus breathed out the Spirit on the apostles on Easter night (John 20:22).

Christian theology has tended to leave the feminine out of God not just from fear of Gnosticism. The great St. Thomas Aquinas understood God as "pure act," but some theologians concluded, illogically (and damagingly), that this leaves no room in God for feminine qualities because "feminine = passive." Hans Urs von Balthasar, whose theology drew so heavily on the visions of the female mystic Adrienne von Speyr and greatly influenced St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict, celebrates the feminine qualities of seeing, giving, and receiving as proper to God because they're all part of the act of *love*.[32]

In fact, it is liturgy and art, great carriers of Christian cosmology, as well as devotion, that bring together the Spirit, Wisdom, cosmology, and Mary in a way that will surprise all Christians. Eastern churches dedicated to the Holy Spirit commonly celebrate their dedication on feasts of Mary.[33] Before Vatican II, the first reading for the Mass of the immaculate conception of Mary is Proverbs 8:22-36, about wisdom, master craftsperson, rejoicing/playing/dancing before God. A tapestry in the French church in London, Notre Dame de France (Our Lady of France) celebrates this (figure 15). The Byzantine icon of Holy Wisdom (figure 11) depicts wisdom as a fiery angel enthroned and surrounded by the cosmos. Christ, also enthroned on the cosmos, is above her, and the Virgin Mary, immediately to her right, and pregnant with Jesus—who is, of course, "the Wisdom from on high." And at the Basilica of St. Maximin in Provence in the south of France, Mary is shown with her hands raised in prayer, with the title "Mary the Virgin, Minister of the temple of Jerusalem" (figure 16)—she is Wisdom ministering in the tabernacle (Sir 24:10). Remember that in Solovyov's vision, Wisdom had eyes of *blue* fire—the Marian color. The Catholic Litany of Loreto celebrates Mary as "Seat of Wisdom," while the Orthodox Akathist celebrates her as a pillar of fire and incense of prayer—like Wisdom.

In fragments of the now-lost *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, a Christian apocryphon translated and used by St. Jerome, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as "my mother," and at his baptism the Spirit calls Jesus "My Son."[34] What can this mean? It *cannot* mean that Mary is the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Scripture is perfectly clear that Mary is human and *not* divine. But she has a special relationship with the Holy Spirit: she conceived Jesus in her womb when the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 1:35). She is celebrated as a great contemplative, pondering things in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51): *someone filled with Wisdom.*

I suggest, then, that Wisdom is *both the Holy Spirit and the Gift manifested in our lives when we are filled with the Holy Spirit*. Mary, saved by her Son, is divinized by grace, the destination of every Christian's journey (see 2 Pet 1:4): and so she is the image of the Holy Spirit, the feminine aspect of God.

It's just as true that as the God Bearer, pregnant with the Son of God, she contains the Wisdom of God (figure 10). All the themes are brought together in Revelation: after the heavenly temple has been opened, revealing the Ark of the Covenant, and amid the thunder, lightning, earthquake, and hail, John sees a great sign in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun (wrapped in light) with the moon under her feet (she has overcome the darkness of night), and crowned with twelve stars. The crown indicates the "crown" chakra, the seventh, highest heaven of *Wisdom*. The woman has "overcome" the cosmos (see chap. 8) and attained full knowledge. She's in labor, however, crying out. The dragon (Satan) tries to take her child (a male), whom God snatches up to his throne, while she flees to a place prepared in the wilderness. Then war breaks out in heaven between the angels of God, led by Michael, and the angels of the dragon (Rev 11:19–12:7).

The woman undoubtedly symbolizes the persecuted church of Jerusalem, forced into exile when the Romans sacked the city and destroyed the temple in AD 70. She is the whole Church, the Bride of Christ, suffering and persecuted throughout history. But the parallel with Mary as the mother of the "male child" Christ is too obvious to miss.

Vatican II emphasized the close connection of Mary with the Church as she was the first to be saved and the first to believe in the Word.[35] Artists have explored the connections as well: A twelfth-century fresco (figure 17) shows Mary enthroned as Mother of the Lord, the "male child" on her lap, with stars over her head, and a mandorla around the throne: she has integrated the heavens.[36] Velazquez's *The Immaculate Conception* (figure 18) has her standing on the moon and crowned with the stars, but not in labor. She stands serene, like Wisdom with the Creator in Proverbs 8. Particularly striking is the Buddhist image of Kwa-yin or Tara, the Boddhisatva of Compassion (figure 19), dressed in red/purple and blue, just like Christian images of Mary. Did a Buddhist, like Solovyov, have a vision of Wisdom?

The drama of Christianity, the drama of reality, is the resurrection journey of the heavens that *is* the Way of the Cross. Through our gifts and our weaknesses, our joys and sufferings, above all through the messy business of learning to love others, the whole creation, and ourselves, the Spirit is leading us through *metanoia*: the repentance of grief, knowledge, and joy that shakes the universe into divine life.

In the Septuagint Greek version of Proverbs 8:30, Wisdom is called not "a master craftsperson" but *harmozousa*, "one who joins together."

This joining together can be seen in the Cosmic Cross joining together the broken bonds of creation; in Mary, in glory *and* in pain at the foot of the cross; and in the extraordinary *harmony* that comes in the most discordant situations, such as the luminous, serene love radiating from St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) on her journey to the gas chambers.[37] Wisdom *harmozousa* is the *harmonizer*, the "heavenly choir mistress," as Margaret Barker said to me. No wonder there is so much music amid the cosmic battles of Revelation.

Chapter 6

The Law of Music

For recordings and images, go to
lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-6-the-law-of-music

How was the music at church last Sunday? Did it really make you feel that "to sing is to pray twice"? If it was praise and worship music, did it make you want to give your life to Jesus? If it was Gregorian chant, did its "holiness and goodness of form" bring delight to your mind? Did the organ give "a wonderful splendor and a special magnificence" to the liturgy, moving everyone's soul "by the grandeur and sweetness of its tones [. . .] an almost heavenly joy," lifting them "up powerfully to God and to higher things," in the words of Pope Pius XII?[1]

Or was the "music ministry" enthusiastic but frankly incompetent? Did the chant just sound miserable? Was the ear-splitting organ voluntary at the end good only for the organist's ego? Was the cantor a tyrant, forcing you to rehearse music you don't like (and why can't he/she just leave you in peace anyway)? Do you secretly long for quiet worship?

If you're one of the musicians, are you fed up with the pastor's indifference to the enormous effort you put into it? Are you fed up with the effort the people don't put in? Do you find—if you're brutally honest—that the preaching, the worship, and the whole church thing have no connection with the spiritual experiences you have through music?

If you're the pastor, are you fed up with the organist's blasting? Does the choir director's know-all attitude get on your nerves? Are you overwhelmed by a sense of "condescension oozing from the choir loft" that sometimes

seems to you little more than "a certain form of agnosticism"—as someone put it?

In short, do we need to dial 911 and ask for Wisdom the choir mistress?

Good Vibrations

Even though most people don't expect the music to take them up to the seventh heaven every Sunday, I really hope no one has consistently had the experience of church music I've just described. But none of it, I suspect, will be totally unfamiliar.[2] As both priest and church musician, I straddle what's often a great divide. There are miracles: you get a pastor who is sensitive both to music and to the needs and capacities of the congregation, and church musicians who are technically competent, committed Christians, and good with people (and even a congregation willing to sing!). But more often, in my experience, the problem is a *lack of common language between clergy and musicians*. Part of this is surely because music, by its nature, goes beyond words: in the third heaven, the heaven of liturgy, the visionary of 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 "heard things that cannot be told."[3] So perhaps instead of a "common language," we should speak of a "common understanding." But how do we arrive at a common understanding? And beyond any questions of practical solutions or styles, I've become convinced that the ongoing problems Western Christianity has around church music ultimately originate in the loss of the Knowledge of Christ.[4]

Where to begin? If nothing else, the tensions and "style wars" over music attest to music's sheer power. The power of music was, and still is, taken very seriously by traditional societies, in part because all the arts are held sacred. They're part of ritual, of mediating humankind's relationship with the divine and the cosmos. In traditional Indian music, the different modes or *rāg(a)s* (literally, "colors") are considered to belong to different times of day, and it's said that the court musician Tam Sen played a night *rāg* at midday with such power that darkness fell where he was standing.[5] In other words, he had a shamanic power with his music. In both Hinduism and some Buddhist practices that have been taken up in contemporary Western spiritualities, the sound AUM (often written "OM") is considered the sound of all creation. In Greek mythology, Amphion built the city of Thebes simply by playing his lyre, while Orpheus, through music, charmed the underworld into releasing his beloved Eurydice. According to the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, music and the soul are related because both are rooted in number, which is also integral to the structure of the cosmos. In Christian cosmology, we've seen that

eight (the musical octave) and twelve (the semitones of Western classical music) have strong symbolic value.

And, of course, in the Bible, David brought Saul relief from his evil spirit of depression by playing the lyre (1 Sam 16:14-23). David was an inspired music therapist. More recently, spiritual teachers such as the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner have taught that the therapeutic value of music lies in its manifestation of a higher cosmic order, and the composer Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915) sought to create a quasi-religious "mystery" through music. Research has even been done on the effect of different kinds of music on plants.[6]

If all this sounds rather far-fetched, let's remember that before all the theories and styles and symbolism, music is sound. And sound is vibration. Try this experiment (you can do this even if you can't sing). Make the highest-pitch sound you can, and see where you feel it most in your body. Then slowly lower the pitch (or sing down the scale) until you reach the deepest sound you can make. All the time, listen to your body.

Did you notice how, as the pitch descended, so the sensation descended in your body? High sounds vibrate up in our heads. The lowest sounds can sometimes be felt even at the base of our spines. Now remember what we said about the correspondence between the chakras and the heavens? This is why music is so powerful. Before it moves our emotions, it's felt in our bodies, along the route of the spinal column, which seems to give access to the deeper levels of our self. In the *Our Father* of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, which Russian Orthodox refugees brought to the West early in the last century, on the words "who art in heaven" the bass line goes *down* (F-E-D-C). The heavens are not "up there": they're the depths of reality (recording 1).

We seldom think about this when we sing: we're more concerned about accuracy, tone, and emotional expression. But in Eastern Christianity—where the liturgy is sung *as normal*—they've retained a way of singing which literally makes its hearers vibrate. It's not particularly loud, it's just very penetrating: we feel it in our whole body (whether it's to our "taste" or not). Even the building seems to vibrate.

I'd especially recommend the recordings of Sr. Marie Keyrouz (recording 2), a Lebanese cantor who sings music from the Maronite and Melkite liturgies. In Semitic languages (such as Hebrew and Sr. Marie's native Aramaic and Arabic), the word for "breath" and "spirit" are the same: *ruaḥ*, as in Latin *spiritus*. We have to breathe in order to sing. We literally need to be "in-spired," "breathed into." If our singing is truly of the Spirit that Jesus breathed on his disciples on the night of the first Easter (John 20:22), we receive healing: our chakras begin to be conformed to the seven heavens of the new creation. So when Sr. Marie sings into the bodies of

the hearers and into the universe the words of Scripture, the Word and Wisdom of God, she breathes out the healing of Christ she has received. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he told his apostles to proclaim the Gospel to "the whole creation" (Mark 16:15)? This way of singing has not totally disappeared from the West: it's still found in Corsican chant, a local derivative of Gregorian chant (recording 3).

Indeed, we know the power of sound in relation to the built environment: buildings can be demolished by playing a very low sound, inaudible to the human ear but corresponding to the *natural frequency* of the building. The building starts to wobble, then collapses. Might some sounds, then, be beneficial and healing? Some healers believe they channel healing through singing or playing an instrument.[7] They're very aware of how one's personal attitude and emotional state come out in the sound (like the egomaniac organist—it's not just sound but how one plays).

Channeling the Word

Jesus says, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25). The *sound* of God will awaken them. This recalls the words of Jesus' contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, in the passage that anticipates the Cosmic Cross (chap. 4):

> The everlasting Word of the eternal God extending Himself from the midst to its utmost bounds and from its extremities to the midst again, keeps up through all its length Nature's unvanquished course, combining and compacting all its parts. For the Father Who begat Him constituted His Word such a Bond of the Universe as nothing can break. [. . .] The Divine Word stations Himself to keep these elements apart, like a Vocal between voiceless elements of speech, that the universe may send forth a harmony like that of a masterpiece of literature. He mediates between the opponents amid their threatenings, and reconciles them by winning ways to peace and concord.[8]

Philo knew the cosmic dimension of God's word *as sung*. The Greek for "word," *logos*, also meant "inner principle," "structure," "measure," "proportion," and "story." God's word is the true structure and history of the universe, re-creating it—and us as part of it—according to the right measures and proportions.

Philo is not just philosophizing: there's a tradition in the Talmud, the central Jewish rabbinic text, that the Levites' duty to make atonement for

the people of Israel (Num 8:19) "refers to the song."[9] In other words, the atonement—at-one-ment, the joining back together the bonds of creation that sin had broken—*came through the Levites' singing*. This may explain the importance of singing the Scriptures in Judaism to this day: for his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the candidate has to *chant* the Scriptures. In the Roman Catholic Church, we still sometimes chant the epistle and gospel reading for "solemn" Masses, but it's the exception rather than the rule. Yet we know that in the Scriptures, particularly the gospels, Christ, the *Word* of God, is speaking to his Church. The Word by whom the heavens and earth were created re-creates them by his incarnation, passion, and resurrection. As brothers and sisters of Christ by grace, we are privileged to chant the Lord's word of re-creation to the whole cosmos.

In the West, the great biblical scholar Fr. Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1855–1938) said:

> I love to hear the Gospel being chanted by the deacon at the ambo, amidst clouds of incense: then, the words penetrate my soul more deeply than when I find them in a discussion in a learned journal.[10]

It seems that through the chant—and the whole liturgy—Fr. Lagrange received a *knowledge* of the Word of God beyond that of reason and learning, a knowledge that structured his soul.

In the Roman Rite, when the deacon—whose spiritual ancestor is the Levite—is about to read the gospel, he receives a blessing from the priest, "that you may worthily proclaim His Holy Gospel." If the priest is presiding on his own, he prays the blessing for himself. This suggests that much more is needed than training in public speaking. If it is Christ the Word of God speaking, then the reader is a channel. Indeed, in the Maronite Rite, the lay reader of the Old Testament or epistle also receives a blessing. Blessings and protection are needed so that the reader does not fall victim either to a spirit of pride ("listen to me") or a "spirit of cowardice" (see 2 Tim 1:7).

Pope Emeritus Benedict, himself an accomplished pianist, explores the *Logos* as a *spirituality* of music.[11] Recovering Pythagorean cosmology through the Christian perspective of St. Augustine, Pope Benedict calls us to be grounded first in the *Logos* as the *Word of God*, handed down in Scripture and liturgy by the chain of witnesses that is the Church. Next, we need the Spirit's gift, which is the *measure* of the *Logos*, so that we make a measured, truly proportioned music. It's the love of the Spirit that arouses our desire to sing and to *know* how to pray and sing. Spiritual singing may well surpass words (like the words that cannot be spoken, heard in the

third heaven, 2 Cor 12:2-4). We might think of melismas—long, ecstatic phrases on one syllable that are found in Eastern and Western chant and early Renaissance choral music. This *logos*-measure/proportion is *ratio* in Latin, from which we also get reason. Initiation into the knowledge of the Christ-*Logos* takes us beyond the limits of human reason into the reason of the universe. Then finally, there is *movement*: "To sing with the universe means, then, to seek the path of the *Logos*, to follow in his footsteps." We're invited to leave the prison of our heads and join the risen Lord and his community of divinized human beings, cosmic people. "Worthy are you to be praised by *holy* voices," in the words of the *Phos Hilaron* ("Hail, gladsome light"), one of the earliest Christian hymns.

This wonderful vision has yet to be put into practice: in the Roman Catholic Church, we rightly put time and effort into forming readers, catechists, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, but nowhere I am aware of gives *spiritual* formation for singing and general church musicianship. When he began the restoration of Gregorian chant to the Roman Church at the beginning of the last century, Pope St. Pius X asked that only "men of known piety and probity of life [. . .] be admitted to form part of the choir of a church."[12] In the very successful *Plainsong for Schools* volumes, widespread in Catholic churches in Britain and its then-empire up until the 1960s, there was a prayer for the choir to sing before rehearsals.[13] But the annual retreats for cantors at Benedictine abbeys proposed at the Catholic Works Congress at Malines, Belgium, in 1909 never got off the ground: instead, there were retreats on the liturgy for parish clergy.[14] In the Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) Eastern Diocese of America, there were retreats for choir in the 1950s under Fr. Torkom Manoogian (later patriarch of Jerusalem),[15] but I don't know of anything else.

And we wonder why we have trouble with church musicians! By contrast, nonclassical "worship music" is often led by a "music *ministry*," whose leader is usually prayed over for an "anointing" to protect and inspire him/her in his/her ministry (see Eph 1:12-14; 4:30).[16] (And remember that Enoch and "Isaiah" were anointed when they rose to the seventh heaven; see chap. 5.) Vestiges exist in churches where choirs wear robes like those of the clergy and altar servers. In the Middle Ages, cathedral choirs were composed of clergy and boys. To this day, in many English cathedrals and larger churches, the professional singers are called "lay clerks," i.e., "lay clerics." While this betokens a clericalist theology of church ministry, perhaps it's a half memory that singing the healing, structuring Word of God into the creation belongs to our baptismal *priesthood* and that the ministerial priests on earth "are" the angels of the heavenly liturgy in which our earthly liturgy participates.

A Cultural Crisis

In forgetting all this, the crisis with music has gone far beyond churches. While the countless orchestras, choirs, and groups specializing in every period and tradition of music are one of the glories of Western culture, *we now have an entire generation where a large number, perhaps even the majority, have had no contact with classical music.* I know people in their twenties and thirties with doctorates who've never attended a classical concert and find classical music elitist and inaccessible (esoteric?). Many classical musicians have strong spiritual instincts, but can you imagine a symphony orchestra's beginning their rehearsals with spiritual meditations? It would seem bizarre, in spite of the fact that the roots of Western classical music can be found in Pythagorean philosophy and Christian liturgy. Losing this connection has plunged classical music into a crisis of meaning and value that has spread right across the arts. A basic cultural education is no longer regarded as essential: in France this is called the "cultural cut" (*la coupure culturelle*).

My working-class grandparents, who had to leave school at fourteen, were very sensitive to classical music. It moved them to silent contemplation and often to tears. I think their sensitivity came partly from the music and liturgy in church. Although often presented in an authoritarian way (because of the culture and the loss of a conscious knowledge of Christian cosmology), the liturgy and its music were intended to point "upward": i.e., to put the congregation in touch with realities beyond the physical. Our current problems with liturgy may not be unrelated to the cultural crisis. We'll explore this in chapter 9. For now, we'll look at what forgotten Christian traditions say about music and cosmology—especially in relation to wisdom.

Music of Knowledge

There were early Christian hymns to the *Logos*, but they've been lost. They'd been banned, partly in reaction to the Gnostic enthusiasm for the *Logos*, which reduced Christ to little more than a philosophical idea, but decisively when "Logomania" reappeared in the theology of Arius, a fourth-century heretic who seems to present Christ (probably unintentionally) as a sort of ascended master rather than God become human. Arius's teachings were spread very effectively through hymns. As a result, *all* the early Christian hymns to the *Logos* were banned by the Church and only what was in the canonical Bible was permitted to be read and sung in church.[17]

But one collection of early Christian hymns was rediscovered in 1909. Titled *The Odes of Solomon*, they're written in Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic,

the language of Jesus) and date from between the first and third centuries. While scholars now mostly agree that they're Christian, some scholars initially thought they were Gnostic because of phrases like "the Father of Knowledge is the Word of Knowledge" (or "the knowing Word"); "Keep my mystery, ye who are kept by it: keep my faith, ye who are kept by it. And understand my knowledge, ye who know me in truth."[18] Of course, this now makes sense in the light of the authentic tradition of Christian knowledge.

Odes 17, 35, and 38 sing of a mystical ascent. The *singing* is of capital importance: the higher (or lower) the sounds, the higher (or lower) they vibrate in our bodies. As the height or depth corresponds to different heavens/chakras, such spiritual singing is an ascent of integration. When "Isaiah" reached the sixth heaven, he was singing with the angels (chap. 5, table 1). In Odes 12, the knowledge of the *Logos* of God is given to the singer:

> And it has caused its knowledge to abound in me,
> Because the mouth of the Lord is the true Word,
> And the door of His light;
> And the Most High hath given Him to His Worlds,
> (Worlds) which are the interpreters of His own beauty,
> And the repeaters of His praise,
> And the confessors of His thought,
> And the heralds of His mind,
> And the instructors of His works.[19]

The "worlds" may well be the multiple heavens. The style recalls what is probably part of an early Christian hymn in the First Letter of Paul to Timothy (3:16):

> He was made manifest in the flesh,
> justified in the Spirit,
> seen by angels,
> proclaimed among the peoples,
> believed on in the cosmos,
> Taken up in glory.[20]

The Cosmic Cross is suggested by Ode 26:

> For from the East and even to the West
> Is His praise:
> And from the South and even to the North
> In His confession:
> And from the top of the hills to their utmost bound
> Is His perfection.[21]

Remarkably, some of the *Odes* have been turned into modern worship songs in *The Odes Project*[22] (recording 4).

In spite of the ban on hymns to the *Logos*, the Knowledge of Christ was still handed down in hymns (see chap. 3). But when the knowledge was forgotten, it had a bad effect on translation. For example, the hymn *Christe Redemptor Omnium* ("Christ, Redeemer of All"), by the great Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 530–609), is translated in the Roman Breviary, "Christ, whose blood for *all men* [people] streamed."[23] But *omnium* could equally mean "for all things." This is supported by the fourth verse, "Let not earth alone rejoice, / Seas and skies unite their voice / In a new song." The cross heals the cosmos, which responds with rapturous praise through our voices.

Perhaps one of the most famous and lovely cosmological hymns is "Of the Father's Heart Begotten." Part of a longer hymn by the Roman poet Prudentius (ca. 348–ca. 410), whose cosmological interests are often assumed to be a hangover from his pagan days, it celebrates Christ as the Alpha and Omega, beginning and end (Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13) of all creation. It became a Finnish Lutheran hymn for Christmas, still sung in Latin, and set to a beautiful medieval tune now called *Divinum Mysterium*. It passed to English through the skillful pen of J. M. Neale:

> Of the Father's heart begotten
> Ere the world from chaos rose
> He is Alpha: from that Fountain
> All that is and has been flows;
> He is Omega, of all things
> Yet to come the mystic Close.
> *Evermore and evermore.*[24] (recording 5)

All this supports the teaching of the Talmud, that the Levites make atonement through their singing.

The Origins of Celtic Christianity

We saw in chapter 2 how Celtic Christianity is popular in contemporary spiritualities. With its strong sense of the presence of God in nature, it's often preferred to Roman Christianity, which symbolically triumphed when its date of Easter was adopted in Britain in 664. Clearly this is not just a matter of historical interest: it's about finding support in the past for a battle in the present. A "purer," more spiritual, more feminine, nature-orientated religion is set against *Roman* Catholicism, which is held to be stern, legalistic, and patriarchal. The historical basis of some modern claims about

Celtic Christianity are questionable,[25] but in fact, the authentic cosmological tradition of Christianity makes a lot of sense of what we actually find in remnants of the Celtic tradition—such as the Celtic Crosses (see chap. 4).

Much was transmitted in music too. The *Carmina Gadelica*, Gaelic songs, poems, and blessings from the Outer Hebrides Islands off the west coast of Scotland were collected and translated by the scholar-poet Alexander Carmichael between 1855 and 1910.[26] For example,

> There is no plant in the ground
> But is full of His [Christ's] virtue,
> There is no form in the strand
> But is full of His blessing.
> Jesu! Jesu! Jesu!
> Jesu! Meet it were to praise Him.
>
> There is no life in the sea
> There is no creature in the river,
> There is naught in the firmament,
> But proclaims His goodness.
> Jesu! [etc.] (no. 14)

This people living both in harmony with nature and frequently threatened by it are confident that Christ has created the cosmos and, risen and ascended, fills it. This makes sense of the seemingly very pagan "charm" (Carmichael's title) for a chest seizure: "Power of moon have I over thee, Power of sun [. . .] Power of heaven and power of God have I over thee" (no. 448). Christ our God has filled all things, and we are in him: he has overcome the principalities and powers, the fallen angels who wreak havoc on the elements and humankind. As Christ-ians, anointed to share the divinity of Christ, we can invoke Christ's healing power.

These Hebrideans have fears that may seem primitive to us, praying that the "Chief of chiefs" will make them safe "from every brownie and ban-shee" (no. 10)—though if we believe in the angels of God, we should believe in fallen angels too. And one blessing prays for the "compassing" of the saints, the angels and the *nine* angels to be upon you.[27] "Compassing" suggests the circular movement of the angels as stars, around God.

Most remarkable is this song for the kindling of a hearth (no. 82):

> I will kindle my fire this morning
> In presence of the holy angels of heaven,
> In presence of Ariel of the loveliest form,
> In presence of Uriel of the myriad charms,
> Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,

Without fear, without terror of anyone under the sun,
But the Holy Son of God to shield me.

Uriel was the angel who guided Enoch around the heavens (1 Enoch 19:1; 20:1; 21:9): his name means "Light of God." As one of the traditional seven archangels, Uriel does occasionally appear in Western Christian art (figure 1). The Gnostics believed Ariel was the name of an angel,[28] but in fact it's a town mentioned by Isaiah (29:1), possibly a poetic name for Jerusalem. It means "lion of God" or "*hearth* of God," which fits very well with this prayer. Angels are often identified with fire: "seraphim" literally means "burning ones," and when Enoch came to the holy of holies, there was a blazing fire and myriads of angels (1 Enoch 14:20-24).

What's clear from this is that within the Celtic Christian tradition, at least of the Outer Hebrides, the cosmological knowledge had been retained—*and taught*—for at least as long as it took to filter down into folksong, a sure sign that the people had internalized the knowledge. Although the reference to Ariel could show Gnostic influence (the Celtic monks were great scholars, not only of Christian learning), the tone of the prayer is in no way Gnostic. First, it's addressed to Christ as the Holy Son of God. And second, it's a prayer for conversion of heart: the singer prays to be liberated not only from fear but also from malice, jealousy, and envy. This is a truly bodily spirituality: the challenges of the here and now, especially with regard to the individual's relationship with other people. The cosmic, being our home, our daily environment, and the tasks associated with it (such as lighting a fire) become vehicles of conversion of heart. And it is all the more bodily, all the more impressed on the moment, because it's a *song*.

The reality of the Fall means that the misuse of these prayers as ritual magic can't be ruled out: we've seen in previous chapters how cautious the early Church was about knowledge falling into the wrong hands. But understood in the context of the *whole* tradition of Christianity, Celtic spirituality is a powerful celebration of Christ's victorious, healing presence in the cosmos, of which we are part, and through the priesthood we share with him by grace.

St. Hildegard of Bingen

The recently canonized Hildegard of Bingen was a twelfth-century Benedictine abbess, doctor of the Church, composer, writer, painter, healer, and reformer of Church and society.[29] Her celebration of the feminine, nature, and natural medicine, and of *viriditas* ("greenness") has made her

popular in contemporary spiritualities. She was also a great sophiologist, connecting the Spirit, Wisdom, and the Virgin Mary.

Most of her paintings came from visions she had during migraines (figure 2). The migraines don't explain away the visions: as psychiatrist Oliver Sacks says, "Hildegard's visions were instrumental in directing her towards a life of holiness and mysticism."[30] Furthermore, they're rich in cosmology, which was perhaps almost too much for her mortal frame to bear—and may explain why many mystics have poor health.

Hildegard's *De Operatione Dei* ("On the Working of God"), commonly known as *The Universal Man* (figure 3), shows the microcosm-macrocosm relationship in great detail. Surrounding the man (Christ?) are sixteen fixed stars and the elements, held in place by a circle of bright fire who seems to be a feminine/angelic (?) figure: above her head is Christ, who strongly resembles the Pantokrator ("Ruler of All") of Eastern icons (figure 4). The fiery circle speaks to Hildegard (down in the left-hand corner):

> I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark and I have breathed out nothing that can die. But I determine how things are—I have regulated the circuit of the heavens by flying around its revolving trace with my upper wings—that is to say, with Wisdom.[31]

She continues that she is "the fiery life of the divine essence," shining in the waters, sun, moon, and stars and giving life to all creation. She "set up the pillars that sustain the orb of the earth." She is "rationality, having the wind of the resounding Word." She is at the service of all living things, she is life through eternity. Love of the whole creation is part, then, of God's Wisdom. And "Eternity is called the Father, the Word is called the Son and the breath that connects these two is called the Holy Spirit."[32]

We can see that this figure is clearly Wisdom/the Holy Spirit, who was there working with God when he "drew a *circle* on the face of the deep" and she set up her seven pillars (Prov 8:27; 9:1). Wisdom was the "starry flame" who brought Israel over the Red Sea (Wis 10:17; cf. Exod 13:21-22), illuminating Israel while leaving her enemies in darkness:

> For the whole world was illumined with brilliant light,
> and went about its work unhindered,
> while over those people alone heavy night was spread,
> an image of the darkness that was destined to receive them;
> but still heavier than darkness were they to themselves. (Wis 17:20-21)

Verses full of psychology. The Byzantine icon of Holy Wisdom (figure 5), which we encountered in the last chapter, depicts her as a fiery angel

enthroned and surrounded by the cosmos. Christ (also enthroned on the cosmos) is above her; the Virgin Mary, pregnant with the *Logos*, is to the left, and a male figure representing the prophets to the right. Above all this are the seven archangels in the heavens. Another of Hildegard's paintings (figure 6) shows her vision of the ninefold angelic hierarchy,[33] circling, just as Enoch had seen them (1 Enoch 71:8-9).

Today people often see Hildegard's images as mandalas, which actually mean "circles" in Sanskrit, and represents the universe. In Hinduism, and especially Buddhism, they're used for meditation and teaching. The *Mandala of Vajradhatu*, like Hildegard's vision of the angelic hierarchy, makes use of the square (earth?) as well as the circle (figure 7). There is much to be explored here.

Hildegard's music is like Gregorian chant though more florid and wide-ranging. It has a peculiarly penetrating quality, especially when sung in a Gothic building. Some pieces have a simple, drone-like instrumental accompaniment, and occasionally the voices go into counterpoint (two different melodies at the same time). But it's very much in the tradition of the Gregorian chant to which, seven times a day, Hildegard and her sisters would have sung psalms and other pieces based on Scripture. Monks and nuns sometimes speak of Gregorian chant as a "commentary on Scripture," and some chants are shaped according to the natural forms described in the Scripture verses. For example, in *Sicut cervus* ("As a hart longs for flowing streams," Ps 42) the melody around *fontes aquarum* ("flowing streams," Latin "springs of water") has the shape and the flow of streams of water. So it sings the Word of God into the waters and sings the water's praise of God (recording 6).

Hildegard builds on this cosmic connection. Regarding herself humbly as only "a feather on the breath of God"—who is the Holy Spirit and the fuel of singing—Hildegard could sing all the Spirit's works of Wisdom.

And Wisdom is deeply connected for Hildegard with the Virgin Mary: so in O *frondens virga* ("O leafy branch") Hildegard compares Mary with a tree (Sir 24; Rev 22:2; recording 7). In O *viridissima virga, Ave* ("Hail, O greenest branch"), the fragrance of balsam (another Wisdom attribute, Sir 24:15) is in Mary, and when she "bloomed [. . .] the whole earth was made happy in her" (recording 8). In O *ignis Spiritus Paracliti* ("O fire of the Spirit Paraclete"), the Holy Spirit, who holds all of nature together, "educates" and makes happy the learned with the inspiration of Wisdom (recording 9).

However radical or even eccentric Hildegard's theology may seem to some nowadays, *it never got Hildegard into trouble*, even though at that time the Church, reflecting society, could mete out severe punishments quite summarily. (Indeed, Hildegard's own community was put under interdict, practical excommunication, for allowing an excommunicated revolutionary

to be buried in its cemetery, even though he'd actually confessed and been absolved before he died.) The most reasonable conclusion is that Hildegard's theology was not considered suspect because in her time Christian cosmology was alive and well.

Wisdom the Choir Mistress

We can see that Christian cosmology gives us back a whole spirituality of musical appreciation and practice. It's a vision of music as a process of healing for hearer, musician, and the entire cosmos. It combines a high mystical vision with a very physical, bodily understanding of music as vibration, seeking through the power of the Spirit to make good vibrations rather than bad, as a "feather on the breath of God." The singer shows forth rather than showing off: he/she sings music of revelation, of the heavenly liturgy.

So the organist, delivered from the egomania that so often comes from insecurity and feeling misunderstood, can tap the organ's true power of resonance. From the notes which can just hold and hold and denote eternity, to the extraordinary range and subtlety of the many different stops, the organist can play the whole creation's praise of God that Daniel and his companions sang in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:28-68). And as it is Christ awakening the cosmos with his voice that makes the cosmos sing, the vibrations of "holy voices" and the organ take us into a true *metanoia,* so that we truly abide in him and he in us (John 5:25; 15:4).

The "music ministry" of worship music, with its rooting in prayer and a biblical understanding of anointing, clearly has a head start. This, beyond any questions of style, may partly explain its enormous success in attracting people to church. Musical "culture wars" are obviously very bad for churches, and books that try to posit theological arguments for one style over another seldom convince and often hurt. I would suggest, though, as worship musicians are already working with the *Odes of Solomon,* that they could explore the relationship between the chakras and the ascent through the heavens. Worship music, like the pop and rock music that often inspire it, seeks immediate emotional impact—with rhythm, volume, and delivery techniques such as voice-break, and so on. Nothing wrong with this: these songs are part of a proud tradition going back to the Franciscan carols of the Middle Ages, whose lively tunes are still to be heard today in traditional Christmas carols. But an almost exclusive hook on emotion can reach only the lower chakras, even at the higher notes. If we are to hear the Lord's call, "Friend, go up higher" (Luke 14:10), we need to seek sounds that connect with the higher heavens/chakras as well—not just pitch but also rhythm and

voice. Classical music may be a resource here, but worship music must never lose its "earthy" sound: many classical choirs suffer from a cerebral delivery rooted exclusively in the higher chakras and therefore disincarnate. By contrast, many traditional forms of chant, such as Corsican, show an awareness of both heaven *and* earth, the integration of all the heavens/chakras.

What of traditional church choirs? Before I started researching this book, I tried an experiment with the ad hoc choir assembled for the beginnings of the Cosmos multimedia dance project[34] in London (2008–2009). Performing as we were in a church, I asked all the artists to spend two minutes with me in silence before the Eucharist. Some were Christians (so the Body of Christ was recognized and worshiped); but others were of other religions or spiritual but not religious. I explained that we needed this meditation to make the transition from the profane to the sacred, from the everyday to the cosmic. They were very still, and then we passed in silence to the practical rehearsal. It flowed very well, I felt very calm, and afterward one of the singers said she wished all choir practices had that preparation. When we performed, several of the audience commented on the power of our singing, even though we were a small group.

Some of those musicians were professionals, so this approach—at least a silent meditation, an awareness of nature—could be brought to "secular" performance. Composers such as Scriabin were interested in the mystical, cosmological dimension of music. The "music of the spheres," the harmony of numbers made by the movements of the planets, known to Pythagoras and others, has been worked out in all sorts of schemes of scales and modes. Hildegard herself uses it in O *vis aeternitas* ("O power of eternity," recording 10), in which she uses the third mode (on the piano, the white notes only in a scale starting on E), because it seems suspended—between heaven and earth. There are lots of different theories about "planetary scales."[35] Perhaps, at best, they represent different people's spiritual experiences—just like the different accounts of heavenly ascent by the early Christian mystics.

. . . And the Law of Music

Marc Vella is a pianist who literally tows his piano around the world, playing in cities and countryside, in deserts and on top of buildings—a cosmic music indeed. He emphasizes the transcendent power of music to bring us to our true selves—against the spirit of unhealthy competition too often present in the world of professional music. As a piano teacher, he says he teaches in order to spread love and joy: "the key of the great awakening,

the road leading to *gnosis*."[36] This is not far from Paul: "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [. . .] For we know only in part," but love, the greatest, is perfect and never ends (1 Cor 13:1, 8-9).

Marc Vella's next step is a challenge: "If we live like this, then there's inevitably less need for authority and laws, as love carries within itself its own values."[37] Music, of course, has its laws: harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, and so on. But to learn them is to learn to use them *with wisdom*, until we learn how the same sound can be a discord or a great harmony, depending on its context.

But artists' frequent bridling at the constraints of the law and custom can make governments—and the Church—nervous! After all, who wants to live in a lawless society? In church, this tension is often played out in clashes between the inspired musicians who want to do a wonderful new piece for Christmas, and the pastor who wants the liturgy sung "correctly and soberly" or for "the people to be able to join in."

As so often, clashes over art reveal deeper issues. The law of music raises the whole question of "the law" in Christianity. Today, devout Christians are often at loggerheads over the status of the moral laws of their own churches. The debates about "the law" in the New Testament were about far more than whether or not the Gentile converts should observe the Jewish law (Acts 15). Paul rails at the Galatians for wanting to observe a law that put them under a curse and could not justify them (Gal 3:1, 10-14). He connects the law with sin and death, against "the law of the *Spirit of life* in Christ Jesus" (Rom 7; 8:1)—i.e., Wisdom. James, who reminds his hearers of the need for good works as the fruit of faith, speaks of the law of perfect freedom (Jas 1:25), while John will speak of loving God as keeping his commandments (1 John 5:1-5).

Yet in Matthew, perhaps the most Jewish of the gospels, Jesus says,

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then breaks one of the last of these commandments and teaches people so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens.[38] (Matt 5:17-18)

The iotas and dots were the vowel marks between the Hebrew consonants, just as Philo had taught that the Word of God who was the Bond of the Universe was "like a Vocal between voiceless elements of speech." Changing the vowels changed the meaning or sense, which was the origin of the rabbinic discussions.

Jesus is not denying that the law needs interpretation. Rather, as the passage that follows demonstrates, Jesus, who *is* the voice of God, the Singer harmonizing, healing the universe, calls us to return to the *original unity* of creation. So it's not enough not to kill my brother or sister, I must not even be angry with or insult him or her (Matt 5:22), because this breaks the bond of love. Similarly Jesus' teaching against divorce, because "*from the beginning* it was not so" (19:8; 5:31-32).

Remember from chapter 4 that sin is the breaking of the bonds of creation. We fall into that brokenness when we transgress the *limits* of what is healthy and harmonious for creation (such as deforestation). But it was *Wisdom* who was with God when he set *limits* on the sea (Prov 8:29). From repentance, entering into Wisdom's Knowledge, comes *re-ligion*, binding back together. The original purpose of the Jewish law was to bring harmony between people and between humanity and creation. Hence the Sabbath rest, and the "sabbatical" year every seven years: no sowing, nor harvesting, so the earth could rest. And in the Jubilee, every fifty years, all debts were to be canceled (Lev 25). This understanding—which greedy exploitation of people and of the earth and boom-bust economics have forgotten—is the harmonious Law of Wisdom. It was this that Jesus was recalling and accomplishing. And it's why we sing in church.

Or is this harmony just too perfect, too sweet? When Matthew 5 is read in the Sunday gospel, I always feel for the divorced and remarried in the congregation. Is following this law here on earth as difficult—and perhaps impossible—as creating a perfect music? Does it in fact make the law once more a tyrant, deaf to the wisdom of psychology, creating an intolerable, neurosis-inducing tension between holiness and wholeness?

In some Christian churches, there is a process for seeing if an irretrievably broken marriage may be annulled, i.e., recognized as invalid because lacking from the outset an essential quality for a Christian marriage (though this has its own difficulties and is no "magic solution"). But there is the more general question of any situation in which we feel an impossible tension, a *discord*, between what our church teaches on the one hand, and our lives on the other. We need Wisdom: but is the law of music enough?

Let's not forget that in music there are discords as well as harmonies that are part of a *process* toward resolution. As Pope Benedict said, "To sing with the universe means [. . .] to seek the path of the Logos, to *follow in his footsteps*." We are not expected to "get there" all at once. *Metanoia*, the Way of the Cross, the integrating ascent through the heavens, is just that, a *journey*, a process. It is *movement*. But it was movement that was perhaps the greatest casualty when Wisdom's Knowledge was forgotten.

Chapter 7
Dancing with Angels

For images, recordings, and videos, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-7-dancing-with-angels

Dancing in church? It's not like saying "music in church," is it?

In the past forty years, dance has taken place in some churches, but it remains controversial. Some see liturgical dance as a joyful and expressive way of including the body in worship and perhaps as recovering something that was normal in the early Church. To others, any kind of dance in church is unnecessary, undignified (especially if done by amateurs), and borderline immodest. It competes with the liturgy rather than enhancing it.

The sudden arrival (return?) of dance in the churches is not a coincidence. A revolution has been taking place in the West that amounts to nothing less than the return of spirituality to dance. This revolution began early in the last century, just when political revolutions were shaking Europe and ushering in social change. Some dancers began to rebel against the conventions of ballet, which they found rigid and stifling. In 1913, the composer Igor Stravinsky and the choreographer Sergei Diaghilev premiered their *Rite of Spring* with the Ballets Russes in Paris. The music was discordant and violent. Elegant balletic movements were replaced with wild, frenzied gestures and stamping. The *Rite of Spring* was inspired by the pagan spring rites of pre-Christian Russia, in which a virgin was sacrificed to the earth goddess. There was a near riot at the first performance, and Stravinsky had to escape down a drainpipe.

But he was inspired by *religion*. In the same period, Rudolf Laban was rediscovering choreography as movement in and with nature. He was interested in mystical spiritualities such as Sufism and esoteric traditions such as Rosicrucianism. And he was struck by how traditional societies understood dance and all the arts as *ritual*. Laban spoke of "choreosophy," or "dance wisdom": dance could bestow wisdom through, essentially, an altered state of consciousness. In 1914, one of his dancers, Mary Wigman, created *Hexentanz* ("Witch's Dance," video 1). She spoke of a bodily experience of being "nothing *but* dance," in "the dance to which I sacrifice myself. [. . .] It has an effect like a frenzied drunkenness which clouds my senses and frees me from the exterior world."[1]

Mystical ecstasy—or a dark madness, dabbling with the occult? Certainly Laban's circle—particularly during their time in the Monte Verità artists' commune in Switzerland—were sexually promiscuous, financially irresponsible, and generally unstable. But choreographers from Isidora Duncan and Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey and Angelin Preljocaj, far less extreme than Laban, have been inspired by religious and specifically Christian themes. Preljocaj is especially moved by Christ's words, "This is my body," and believes dance and prayer are closely related—though he sees Christian teaching as more of a symbol than as faith in a reality.[2] Working with dancers, I've been struck by how many speak of "going to another place" when they dance and describe themselves as spiritual people. And many nonreligious people practice dance as spirituality. Naturally, they want to dance in sacred spaces: but the response from churches is often frosty or at least nervous. This can easily come across as Christians being frightened of the body.

When liturgical dance started to cause controversy, the Vatican responded. It was actually very positive about dance in general and its place in the liturgies of the Eastern churches, such as the Ethiopian (see below). But it forbids dance in Western liturgies on the grounds that, in Western culture, dance is associated "with love, with diversion, with profaneness, with unbridling of the senses."[3] The Vatican does however allow dance as worship outside the liturgy under suitable conditions, and it's officially permitted in the Zairean form of the Roman Rite. Indeed, dance is a cultural necessity in many African countries. But what do we say to these dancers knocking on our church doors, for whom dance is a profound spiritual exploration, as little connected with "unbridling of the senses" as Haydn's C*reation* is with disco music? And what about Christians who are fed up with being "stuck in the pew" but find liturgical dance, permitted or otherwise, unspiritual in comparison with a contemporary dance performance?

For all the problems and challenges in church music, we have no problem with music *as such*. We have solid scriptural support for singing "psalms

and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph 5:19). But we seem to have no such reference point for dance. In this chapter, we'll find that dance was an important part of Christian cosmology.[4]

Circling God

As Laban discovered, in traditional cultures, dance is ritual. In many African cultures it's understood as bridging heaven and earth. In Japan, it's strongly cosmological. In Hinduism, wherever one dances becomes a temple.[5] Sufi Muslims (Dervishes) believe they whirl in line with the earth's axis.

And dancing in a circle, traditionally understood as the shape of the sky and the movement of the stars, is pretty well universal. It implies equality between the participants and denotes an "inside" and "outside" to the ritual.

In the Old Testament, though there are passages that describe dancing, there's no Hebrew word for dance as such. Rather, the words describe the particular *movement*. The most common is in fact a circle: Miriam's dance after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 15:20); the joyful dance after victory in battle (Judg 11:34); and the idolatrous dancing around the Golden Calf (Exod 32:19). God draws a circle on the deep (Job 26:10), but the drunkard staggers (literally, "goes round in circles," Ps 107:27). In Psalms 149 and 150, the people are called on to praise God with circular movement which is usually translated as dance. As these are both psalms about praising God in the assembly of the faithful (149:3), and "in his sanctuary; [. . .] in his mighty firmament" (150:1), could it be liturgical dance?

According to the Mishnah, a collection of Jewish oral tradition written down in the third century of our era, at the feast of Succoth (Tabernacles), devout men used to sing and dance with burning torches before the people (probably in the inner and outer courts).[6] Basically, they were representing for the people what the priests were doing, hidden from view in the sanctuary. Psalm 26:6, "go around your altar," is probably talking about Succoth too, and the same word is used of the procession that brought down the walls of Jericho (Josh 6).

So Scripture neither condemns nor praises dance, nor any particular kind of movement. Rather, it depends *in what spirit* the movement is being made. Are we moving with God's circle over the deep as he creates the cosmos? Or staggering because we're drunk? Are we going around the altar of God in praise of him? Or worshiping a false god? (As Pope Francis says, the "worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose."[7])

And, of course, David did a whirling dance before the Ark of the Covenant—the Presence of God—as it was brought into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:14; 1 Chr 15:29). While on one level, this was a victory dance—he was claiming Jerusalem—the angels/stars moved in a circle around the House of God, as Enoch saw (1 Enoch 71:8-9). And Ezekiel saw the wheels of God's chariot, the *ophanim* (Ezek 1; 10:9-17), as they rolled along the earth, next to the living creatures. There were eyes on the rims of the wheels, and the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. In other words, the wheels were angels. But Enoch also saw that "many of the chiefs of the stars shall make errors in respect to the orders given them; they shall change their courses and functions and not appear at the seasons prescribed for them" (1 Enoch 80:6). They were dancing badly, not following God's choreography. So for humans to move in God's choreography—the circle of the liturgy of Succoth—is to dance with the good angels.

Indeed, God himself may dance: according to the Jerusalem Bible translation of Zephaniah 3:17, "He will dance with shouts of joy for you." Again, the Hebrew word is connected with a circular form and might refer to the movement of God's chariot-throne, the *merkabah*, which is the subject of so much later Jewish mysticism: God rides across the heavens (Pss 68:33; 104:3), just like the sun "moving" across the sky.

And we could easily miss a very important verse: depending on the translation, Wisdom rejoiced, played, or *danced* before God at the creation of the world (Prov 8:30-31). She did this as "a master craftsperson," a *harmozousa*—one who joins together in harmony, a heavenly choir mistress (see chaps. 5, 6). Or, "like little children." The different versions give us different perspectives on Wisdom. Only those who become "like little children" (Matt 18:3) can inherit the kingdom of the heavens—those who have (re)learned how to play. Wisdom is a master of her craft. She is a choir mistress who works with God in his harmonious (re) creation of the cosmos. Wisdom is a dancer: she alone "compassed (i.e., circled) the vault of heaven" (Sir 24:5). And we'll see that the choir of angels are singing dancers. *So Wisdom* harmozousa, *choir mistress, is also a choreographer.*

Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher we've already encountered, wrote of a cosmic dance. He believed that the lover of God leaps up to heaven to dance with the sun and the moon and the stars (who, he knew, were angels).[8] The word for "dance with" in Philo's Greek is *synchoreuein*, literally, "form a choir with." The Christmas carol O *Come, All Ye Faithful* sings of "choirs of angels" which nowadays we see exclusively in terms of singing (as in a church choir). But the *choros* of classical Greek drama had the dual function of singing and dancing.

Philo seems not to have known the Enoch tradition, and he was probably drawing on the cosmology of the Greek philosopher Plato. But Plato has striking similarities with the Jewish tradition, as we've already seen (chaps. 3, 4). And he believed that the fixed stars danced by rotating on their axis and forward movement and were *living beings* (cf. Ezek 1). In other words, Plato knew the stars were angels. He said also that the planets were "the visible created gods," which made turns and counterturns.[9] In Scripture, angels are sometimes called "gods": God holds judgment "in the midst of the gods" (Ps 82:1), and the fallen angel Satan is one of the "sons of God" (Job 1:6, Hebrew).

All this is part of the tradition of the *musica mundana*, "cosmic music," or Music of the Spheres, which goes back to Pythagoras: as the stars dance in the wonderful mathematics of their orbits, they create a harmonious music. Philo knew a remarkable community where something like this was practiced: a Jewish monastery of men and women called the *Therapeutes* ("healers," or "praisers"). They praised God with singing and precise dancing movement of procession and circling—like the stars/angels—and with moments of stillness and pause. Eusebius (ca. 260/265–339/340) thought they were Christians.[10] They almost certainly weren't—but that suggests that, for early Christians, praising God with movement was normal.

The Choreography of the Early Church

The New Testament, like the Old, neither condemns nor praises dance. Like the dance around the Golden Calf, the dance of Herodias's daughter for Herod that resulted in John the Baptist's martyrdom (Matt 14:3-11; Mark 6:17-28) has inspired artists, and their imaginations have sometimes run riot.[11] Jesus mentions festive dancing in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:25) and compares the unbelief of his generation to "children sitting in the market place and calling to their playmates, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn' " (Matt 11:17; Luke 7:32). We should also recall, "Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy," in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:23): just as John the Baptist leapt in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:41, 44). And there is the *moving star* (perhaps Halley's Comet) which guided the Magi (Matt 2:9).

Christian prayer was from the earliest times bodily. "I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument," says St. Paul (1 Tim 2:8). Raising the hands implies a raising of the center of consciousness (as in, "Set your minds on things that are above," Col 3:2), and "without anger or argument" implies that spirituality

is not just about me, but about peace within the whole Body of Christ, the Church. There are many images from the Roman catacombs of Christians praying with hands raised (figure 1), a gesture revived by the charismatic movement.

Kneeling was a gesture of adoration: "At the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:10). The whole cosmos would kneel in adoration at the name which, according to the Enoch tradition, was the oath that held the universe together. It was the name identified with the name of the Son of Man that the fallen angels wanted to steal (1 Enoch 69). And in Revelation, the elders *fall down* and worship God (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 19:4).

So it's not surprising that there's lots of gesture and movement in the liturgy. We stand to greet Christ speaking to us in the gospel, because he, the Word of God, is risen from the dead: the Greek for resurrection, *anastasis*, literally means "standing up." And the circling of the altar on the Jewish feast of Tabernacles continues in the Roman Rite when the priest goes around the altar with incense; and in the Zairean liturgy, the clergy dance around the altar during the Gloria. In weddings in the Byzantine Rite, the priest leads the couple around an altar.

And according to Clement of Alexandria, a key source for Christian knowledge,

> So also we raise the head and lift the hands to heaven, and set the feet in motion at the closing utterance of the prayer, following the eagerness of the spirit directed towards the intellectual essence; and endeavoring to abstract the body from the earth, along with the discourse, raising the soul aloft, winged with longing for better things.[12]

Clement was probably talking about the procession at the end of the liturgy. He clearly understood the *movement* as somehow lifting us up to consider the invisible levels of reality.

Clement also reached out to the followers of the pagan cult of Dionysius by describing the Christian liturgy in their language. The Dionysians were notorious for orgiastic dancing, so Clement speaks of "the daughters of God, the fair lambs, who celebrate the holy rites of the Word (*Logos*), raising a sober choral dance." Who are the "daughters of God"? They might be the order of virgins (see 1 Cor 7:25, 32, 34): they're mentioned in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a Christian allegory from the late first to mid-second century. Hermas is left by the Shepherd to spend a night in prayer with twelve young virgins who had already shown themselves miraculously strong in carrying stones, standing "courageously as though they were about to bear

the whole of the heavens." Welcoming Hermas with sisterly affection, they played with him, some of them dancing, some moving rhythmically, others singing. Hermas said it was as if he had become young again.[13] Remember Wisdom rejoicing/dancing/playing before God at the creation of the world, as a little child, for only those who were like little children could inherit the kingdom of the *heavens*.

And according to the *Protoevangelium of James*, an apocryphon of the second century that assembles traditions of Mary's life, her parents presented her in the temple as a child to be a temple maiden. Her father, Joachim, placed her on the third step of the temple, and "the Lord God put grace upon her and she danced with her feet, and the whole house of Israel loved her."[14] This isn't merely a touching story. Mary was filled with *grace*, God's Holy Spirit (see chap. 5). So she's full of *Wisdom*, who *dances* and *plays* in her, a *little child*. In Mary, Wisdom reclaims her ministry in God's holy tabernacle (Sir 24:1, 10)—as choreographer?

The Dance of the Angels

St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, one of the very first Christian writers after the evangelists, speaks of the incarnation of Christ in terms of a star, brighter than all the others shining in the sky; in response, the rest of the stars and the sun and the moon formed a dance around it.[15] Non-Christian Neoplatonist philosophers such as Plotinus, a couple of generations later, would also speak of dance around a leader as a symbol (or actual means?) of raising the mind.[16] Ignatius would probably have known Plato and Enoch's ascent to heaven (Jude 14), when he saw the circling angels. Indeed, the early Christians could be at home with Plato *because of* their Jewish inheritance. This might also explain why sometimes they got carried away with incompatible aspects of Plato's thought, such as his belief that the body was only a vehicle or tool.

In fact, an angelic dance, celebrating the incarnation and resurrection and involving the whole cosmos, is mentioned by many Church Fathers. While they're better known for condemning dance, from the context it's clear that they were referring to wild, alcohol-fueled folk dancing for which church festivals might provide an excuse, and which could and did lead to sexual chaos (like some nightclub dancing today). They speak very differently of the angelic dance, in which, they say, Christians participate. According to St. Basil of Caesarea (ca. 330–379), dancing with the angels is part of the Spirit's gift, along with understanding mysteries, perceiving hidden things, and *divinization*. And it was Basil who taught that the *gesture*

that is the Sign of the Cross was one of the traditions handed down silently and "in mystery" (in the liturgy), so as to guard the sacred character of the mysteries and to prevent the knowledge *(gnosis)* of doctrine from being scoffed at by the uninitiated.[17]

The richest account of the angelic dance is from Basil's brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa:

> For there was a time when the dance of rational nature (i.e., humankind and the angels) was one, and looked to the one leader of the dance-chorus, and, in its movement in relation to his command, interpreted the choral song in relation to the harmony which came forth from it. But later, when sin occurred, it put an end to that divine concord of the chorus, when it broke this divinely inspired harmony of the dance. By its slippery deception, sin tripped up the feet of the first human beings who were dancing with the angelic powers and triggered humanity's fall. The result was that humanity's closeness to the angels was broken, because the fall had sundered their relationship.

The leader of the dance is, of course, Christ. But, according to Gregory, the person who struggles against temptations will be taken up and restored to the dance of the angels, just as Lazarus, who endured so many trials, was taken up by the angels (Luke 16:22). Gregory says this can *only* mean he was taken back into the angelic dance.[18] In other words, the angelic dance is the reward for—and perhaps part of—the process of *metanoia*, repentance.

With this background, the Easter dance of the French cathedrals with which this book began falls into place. It was simply doing, *incarnating*, what Gregory said: a true theology of the body. Indeed, was Gregory describing an actual liturgical dance? We'll come back to that, but first, a bit more on the cathedral dances. The music was the *Victimae Paschali* ("Praise to the Paschal Victim"), the sequence of Easter morning Mass in the Roman Rite (recording 1). It was probably danced to the farandole, a folk dance in triple time. This would have obvious trinitarian symbolism. In its medieval form, the *Victimae Pachali* also had eight verses, in four pairs,[19] that would express the mystery of the eighth beyond the seven heavens. It was the first day of the new week, the mystery of baptism, the Paschal *transitus* (crossover) from the four-square of earth to the circle of heaven.

In many of the cathedrals, the dance took place on a labyrinth. Labyrinths are, of course, pre-Christian and found in many cultures. They're variously understood as a return to the womb, a descent into the earth, or an experience of the axis of heaven and earth. For Christians, they were also a symbolic way of making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And they represented the descent of Christ into Hades and his triumphant return to heaven—a

completion of the pre-Christian understanding. At Chartres cathedral, the labyrinth (figure 2) is exactly the same diameter as the great rose window of the Last Judgment on the west front (figure 3), which is directly above the labyrinth. On earth as it is in heaven.

Labyrinths have returned in contemporary spiritualities and have rightly been reclaimed by Christians. If you've tried labyrinth you'll know that it really is a journey of going in and going deep (not to mention the surprising twists and turns along the way), then returning and noticing the difference. To dance around it would have been an extraordinary experience—it may even have been a rite of induction for new clergy at the cathedral.

Nowadays pilgrims, predominantly spiritual but not religious, are permitted to walk the Chartres labyrinth on Fridays, seeking, some of them told me, to absorb earth energies. The idea of these energies deserves further exploration—although some caution is needed as the fallen angels are those who fell to earth.

In 2012 we did the Chartres dance at the *Re-creation* conference[20] at the Holy Biscuit arts hub in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. To a reconstruction of the original music (recording 2), thirty of us danced in the garden, watched by our bemused neighbors. The step requires both a kick up and landing with both feet on the ground. As we go up, we see the stars. As we come down, we feel the earth. And everyone is united in a circle: a great way of praying "on earth as it is in heaven." We included the ball game used in some forms of the dance. Did it represent Christ the Rising Sun, leader of the dance? Or (also) the world, dancing because it has been re-created from chaos into cosmos (the Greek word for "order") by the risen Christ, who "ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10)?

A few times the ball got dropped. But this wasn't a disaster. Someone picked it up, we all laughed, and rejoined the dance. Perhaps, from the perspective of eternity, that's how the Fall looks to the angels of God. "O happy fault," we sing in the Exultet, the great hymn of cosmic praise at the Easter vigil. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). Adam and Eve fell, but Christ raised them up higher than they had been before. So the dance teaches us not to be depressed by sin and suffering, but rather to practice true repentance, *metanoia*, so that we know as God knows, and let that knowledge guide our lives. Above all, in stark contrast to Stravinsky's and Diaghilev's *Rite of Spring* (which ends in death), the Easter dance marks a radical transition from death to *life*.

The angelic dance caught the imagination of many medieval artists. The *Mystical Nativity* by Sandro Botticelli (1444–1500) shows the angels dancing above the stable, while some of them have come down to dance with the shepherds (figure 4). In his *Last Judgment*, Fra Angelico (ca. 1395–1455)

has the blessed in a circle dance with the angels (figure 5), while in his *Noli Me Tangere* ("Do not cling to me," John 20:17) he shows the risen Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene (figure 6). Christ's legs are *crossed*, a traditional symbol of the resurrection. And his pose is that of a dancer. All around the Lord, the flowers are in bloom, the red ones exactly the same color as his wounds. A statue in the Benedictine abbey of St. Scholastika, Dinklage, Germany, probably medieval, portrays Christ simultaneously in his passion and resurrection (figure 7): he wears the crown of thorns but dances with his left foot crosswise to his right, the pose of the resurrection. He wears the loincloth, like David when he danced before the Ark. It makes me think of many artists I know who go through such anguish to create new work, often in very difficult circumstances, yet the result is so beautiful and healing.

The Dance of the Liturgy

The great Christian philosopher monk Pseudo-Dionysius (late fifth to early sixth centuries) understood knowledge in terms of movement. As well as influencing theologians, he inspired the founder of Gothic architecture, Abbot Suger (1081–1151). It was in Gothic cathedrals, with their soaring, upward dynamic, that the Easter dances would take place.

Pseudo-Dionysius is so called because until the fifteenth century his writings were thought to be by Dionysius the Areopagite, who believed as a result of St. Paul's preaching in Athens, one of the great centers of Greek philosophy (Acts 17:34). Pseudo-Dionysius puts great emphasis on not just having studied but having been initiated. Advances in the study of ancient texts with the coming of the Renaissance showed beyond reasonable doubt that the Dionysian writings couldn't go back to Paul's convert. But people had believed this not just out of ignorance but because they recognized in Pseudo-Dionysius's writings Christian cosmology—which, of course, Clement of Alexandria called "the second initiation." And it was St. Paul who was traditionally believed to be the person taken up into the third heaven (2 Cor 12:4), where, Gregory of Nyssa believed, he had an "initiation in the sanctuary of Paradise" (see chap. 4).

For Pseudo-Dionysius, true knowledge and understanding are a sharing in the knowledge of God and the "divine intelligences," i.e., the angels. The angels move, so in moving with them we share in their knowledge. Plato's description of the movement of the stars strongly influenced Pseudo-Dionysius, but only because he saw how Christian liturgy connected with Plato's thought.

Pseudo-Dionysius describes the singing in the Divine Liturgy (the Eucharist) as placing the people and the divine realities together in "one single concordant choral dance of holy beings."[21] In speaking of movement and knowledge, Pseudo-Dionysius gives three forms: the circle (very familiar to us by now), the straight line, and the spiral. Pseudo-Dionysius was especially interested in the angels moving in circles, recognizing them as the wheels of God's chariot in Ezekiel 10. The first, inner rank of the nine orders of angels, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, "circles in immediate proximity to God. Simply and ceaselessly, it dances around an eternal knowledge of him."[22] By moving in a circle, they are at one with the "illuminations" that emerge without beginning or end from the Good and the Beautiful. For human beings, to move in a circle concentrates our minds.

When the angels move in a straight line, they come to offer divine, unerring guidance to all those below them. This enables our minds to move to understand things around us (moving sideways), and up from external things "to the simple and united contemplations." *In other words, the Cosmic Cross*.

When the angels move in a spiral, they're both providing for those "down below" and revolving around the Beautiful and the Good that are the source of their identity. When we move in a spiral, we're employing "discursive reasoning in mixed and changeable activities,"[23] which probably just means the daily reality of living a spiritual life in a busy, complicated, and often unpredictable and messy world.

But if Pseudo-Dionysius sounds a bit too "high falutin," what he says in fact resonates with descriptions of the liturgy in the Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople (Istanbul)—*and also with the experience of today's dancers*. Procopius, a historian from the generation after Pseudo-Dionysius, says that the pillars of the Hagia Sophia "do not stand in a straight line, but they retreat inward in the pattern of the semicircle as if they were yielding to one another in a choral dance." The poet Paul the Silentiary (d. 575/580) describes the Hagia Sophia in terms of circular motion, with a sudden break that suggests the procession returning to the altar. In other words, he didn't just stroll around the church: *he experienced moving in the liturgy.* To this day, in the Easter liturgy of the Byzantine Rite, everyone carries a candle around the church. They make a circle of fire around the building (figure 8), a symbol both of the risen Body of Christ and the House of God in Enoch's vision.[24]

Paul the Silentiary also says that the Hagia Sophia was lit by a vast circular chandelier or corona ("crown"). It hung down from the principal dome, a "circling choir of bright lights," with a second, inner circle and a disc in the middle. This recalls the cosmic structure of the "circle of the

same and the different" in Plato's *Timaeus* as well as the circling angelic fires in Ezekiel and 1 Enoch. Was Pseudo-Dionysius's idea of knowledge as movement inspired by a similar lighting device? In fact, it's possible that the corona *was made to spin in the liturgy.* While no sixth-century examples survive, they may have resembled the *Polyeleos* used today in many Greek and Serbian churches. It is called *Polyeleos* because it hangs in a dome under the icon of Christ *polyeleos* ("much merciful"). In certain churches on the monastic mountain of Athos, during the Easter Vigil, the monks use long poles to turn the corona as far as the suspending chains permit, and then release it, so that it slowly spins. Lit with candles rather than electricity, the corona turns and counterturns, recalling the movements of the stars in the *Timaeus* and of Philo's *Therapeutes*. The spinning of the corona, the "*Choros* of Light" (figure 9), creates not only a fiery circle but sometimes also a cross (the Cosmic Cross of light). It also illuminates the icons of the saints and Christ in the dome so that *with the movement of the light they seem to dance*.[25]

In the Chora church in Istanbul (Kariye Camii), there's a fresco of the risen Christ pulling up Adam and Eve from Hades (figure 10). With his hand over their wrists, he pulls them in what is unmistakably the strong, almost flying, movement of a rapid dance. The hand-over-wrist gesture also makes a cross shape, the standard symbol of the resurrection we spoke of earlier. But most important, these images formed *part of* the liturgy in the Chora church. They would have been seen by the community as it *moved* around the church in procession from the Anastasis (resurrection) to the Last Judgment and paradise (figure 11), where they would see the great dance of the heavenly church, shifting dramatically from clockwise to counterclockwise.[26]

At the Cosmos dance retreat at the Abbey of Dinklage, in August 2013,[27] we employed the movements described by Pseudo-Dionysius. We also did the Easter cathedral dance, but without the ball. Instead, we joined hands using the "hand over wrist" gesture of the Chora church. We found that not only did it support and stabilize our movement but it also seemed to lighten and lift us without causing us to lose contact with the earth. It was almost as if *the earth was being lifted up to heaven with us*.

And let's hear from two contemporary dancers on performing in churches (figure 12):

> I feel like the church moves with me. Together with me, supporting me almost. I feel the church is alive and does seem to move as I do, especially while I travel through the space, you feel the space respond and almost rush past me (Ellis Saul).

> [The church] made me feel like it was moving with me, but I was being moved by it. [. . .] I could feel every movement and having a reason for doing it. (Yamit Salazar)[28]

In other words, movement and knowledge.

The Gnostic Ring Dance of Christ: A Christian Tradition?

But isn't there an apocryphal text in which Jesus actually dances? Yes, there is: the *Acts of John*. It's a Gnostic text, dating from 150–200, that we've already encountered in connection with the Cosmic Cross (see chaps. 3 and 4). Jesus dances to a hymn with his apostles[29] in what may have been a Gnostic initiation rite. The hymn is much discussed in popular books about dance and religion, which tend only to reinforce the impression that dance is something Gnostic and does not belong to true Christianity.

The hymn replaces the Last Supper and the Agony in the Garden, just as the vision of the Cosmic Cross of light that follows the dance replaces rather than reveals the actual cross of Christ. This has made the hymn popular with some nonreligious spiritual writers of our time, such as John Lash, who says, "Instead of the message of divine sacrifice and the glorification of suffering, typical enforcement of the victim-perpetrator bond, the Mystic Jesus presents a vision of wisdom and harmony."[30] Clearly he's reacting against some of the harmful theologies of the cross to which the Christian teaching of the Cosmic Cross is a powerful antidote. But one reason why the "Hymn of Jesus" still inspires people (the composer Gustav Holst set it to music) is its high literary quality: we can imagine it having an almost hypnotic power over the initiates. The apostles stand in a ring around Jesus, answering "Amen" to each of his phrases. He begins with a doxology:

> Glory be to thee, Father.
> *And we, going about in a ring, answered him:*
> Amen.
> Glory be to thee, Word:
> Glory be to thee, Grace.
> Amen (etc.).

Then, clearly recycling phrases from the Christian gospels,

> I would be saved, and I would save.
> Amen.
> I would be loosed, and I would loose.
> Amen.

Similar phrases follow, some clearly borrowed from Christian cosmology, for example:

> The eighth sings with us.
> Amen.
> The twelfth dances on high.
> Amen.

Even the apostles dancing in a circle around Jesus are like the stars gathered around the bright star of Christ in Ignatius of Antioch's image of the incarnation. Likewise "I will adorn, and I will be adorned": the Greek is *kosmein*, as in "cosmetic," but this also can also mean "order," "*cosmify*." The risen Lord creating cosmos out of chaos: the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:1; cf. 2 Pet 3:13).

Then there are some striking paradoxes, such as, "I have no house, and I have houses," recalling Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58, as well as an early Christian sermon.[31] This structure of paradoxes could more fundamentally reflect the experience of dance in which the dancer's environment seems set in motion, so here and now is different from just a moment ago.

But before this comes, perhaps the most quoted phrase of the *Acts of John*:

> The one who does not dance, does not know what is happening.

While I was researching this book at the Institut Catholique in Paris in 2009–2011, I began a "Practical Seminar in Theology of the Body" with colleagues and friends. Drawing on a movement technique begun by dancer-therapist Miranda Tufnell and sculptor Chris Crickmay and developed by Satya Dunning, we began by lying on the floor and systematically relaxing our bodies and being present to each part (this is sometimes called "experiential anatomy"). Then we very slowly and carefully got to our feet and walked around. Now we were ready to improvise movement, for which we used sacred music. Because some people felt too self-conscious in front of others, we decided to move with our eyes closed. Many of us had the same experience of *moving in a vast space*, even though we knew all the time that the room was quite small. It was as if the dance had made us present to the entire cosmos around us—while we're usually too busy to notice we're part of it.

This suggests that dance is a path to knowledge: "The one who does not dance, does not know what is happening." This completely connects with Rudolf Laban's idea of "choreosophy," and isn't it what Pseudo-Dionysius was saying about knowledge coming through the movement of the liturgy?

Yes—but not quite. It depends *how* one is moving. The Gnostics are dancing in a desperate attempt to *escape* the bodiliness of the Last Supper and the suffering of Jesus. They're trying to flee the world around them, with all its obligations of compassion and love for our fellow human beings and the rest of creation. The Gnostic escape recalls all too sharply the words of Mary Wigman, creator of the Witch's Dance: *"a frenzied drunkenness which clouds my senses and frees me from the exterior world."*[32] Without realizing it, she could have been dancing with the dark, chaotic spiritual forces of the universe, the fallen angels.

But the dance of the liturgy is a return to the angelic dance led by Jesus, to the step of Wisdom the choir mistress and choreographer, who gives knowledge with love. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the movement described by the poet Paul the Silentiary was in the Church of the *Holy Wisdom*. In short, rather than desperately *trying* to move, forcing an ascent to heaven out of earth, *we are moved*. This is, in fact, what dancers frequently report to me when we're working on a piece and it starts to come right: "I felt pulled." Remember how one of them said above that the church was moving with her and she was *being moved by it*. They also say, in the light of this experience, that they "go to another place." Rather than running away from earth to heaven and ending in selfishness and dark chaos, earth is taken up with us to be reunited with heaven.

But the dance in the *Acts of John* does one very valuable thing for us. *Precisely because Gnosticism is a distortion of Christianity,* it points to what we might call a *choreographic consciousness* in Christianity from very early on. This continues in what we've read of Pseudo-Dionysius. It suggests that the early Church did not so much have liturgical dance (which in practice is often inserted in the liturgy to make it "less boring for the young people")—rather, the early Church performed liturgy *as choreography*. The early Christians moved with Wisdom.

It was when Christian cosmology was forgotten in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the cathedral dances fell into disrepute and were banned (or put outside the church building). At least outside church there were still the carols, dances the Franciscans had introduced to connect people's faith with festivity. But whereas before, the nave of the church was a great space where processions moved and people found their place (like in most Orthodox churches to this day), by the sixteenth century pews were the order of the day. Church had changed from dance space to lecture theatre and concert hall. While the transition to a clearer, more intensive preaching of the Word was an unquestionably positive development, in practice the body got lost. St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622), a great promoter of lay spirituality, tolerated dance but considered it harm-

ful to have a strong liking for it. And St. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, the "Curé d'Ars" (1786–1859), revived a failing parish, but did everything to suppress dance, even recalling St. Charles Borromeo's sanction (apparently) of excommunication for reoffenders![33] The dances the Curé attacked were undoubtedly part of drunken and licentious local festivities, much like the dances the Church Fathers condemned. But because the cosmological tradition had disappeared, the Curé couldn't offer an alternative. And today, it means that in church we don't really know what to do with our bodies—and that many of those who do, don't come.

But a few church dances have survived.

Ethiopia and *Los Seises*

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, for a long time isolated from the West, has a ritual dance in the liturgy of Timkat (the Epiphany and Baptism of the Lord). Central to Ethiopian churches is the *Tabot*, or model of the Ark of the Covenant—according to traditional belief, the original Ark of the Covenant is in the Ethiopian town of Axum. Just as David danced before the Ark, so do the Ethiopian priests (video 2). It's not known how old this dance is, but dancing is of course instinctive in most African cultures, as in the Zairean form of the Roman Rite I mentioned earlier. The Ethiopian dance is a line dance, so different from the circular Angelic Dance. I've been told, however, that at Christmas there is a two-level dance with priests above symbolizing the angels, and those below symbolizing the shepherds. This would be just like the angelic dance tradition in the *Mystical Nativity* of Botticelli (figure 4), but I haven't been able to find any documentation for it. (I would be grateful to anyone who can help!)

In the cathedrals of Seville and Cordoba, Spain, the altar boys dance a few times a year. Known as *Los Seises* ("The Sixes"), from the traditional number of dancers, the dances happen in Seville on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (December 8) and on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and in Cordoba on the feast of Corpus Christi (the Body and Blood of Christ): note that all of these feasts have a *bodily* focus.

For the Immaculate Conception dance, the boys are dressed partly in the Marian color of blue and are in two rows of five (in spite of "The Sixes"!), five being the number of each set of rosary mysteries and of Mary's joys in Catholic devotion. The connection with Wisdom was made in the pre–Vatican II Roman liturgy for the Immaculate Conception: the first reading at Mass was Proverbs 8:22-36, about wisdom rejoicing/playing/dancing before

God—just as Mary danced in the apocryphal story. The actual purpose of the dance is to celebrate Mary's coronation as the Star of Triana (the port of Seville). The star, particularly the five point, is commonly associated with Mary, and her Hebrew name in the semi-Latinized form *Maryam* was commonly translated in the Middle Ages as "Star of the Sea." To music that sounds rather mid-nineteenth century, the boys move slowly forward and sideways in circles and moving on the spot (video 3)—all of which recalls the movements of the Angelic Dance and Pseudo-Dionysius.

For the Seville Corpus Christi dance there are nine boys dressed in the liturgical color of white, with added red and gold (video 4). They dance during Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the traditional service of adoration of the Eucharist. The choreography is similar to the Immaculate Conception dance, but using knee movements that recall genuflection ("at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow"). The line and the square are the more common figures, along with the circle and the cross. When the dance finishes the dancers kneel in adoration.

The Cordoba Corpus Christi dance takes place outside, as part of a procession, again with nine dancers in white with red. Similar movements to the Seville Immaculate Conception dance are used, although slightly more elaborate but without the genuflection movements or the kneeling at the end. The dance is in front of the Eucharist, which is carried on a platform by men. The men are static for the duration of the dance, but rock gently from side to side in time to the music (video 5).

Pope Eugene IV "authorized" the dances in 1439, which suggests that they were already meeting resistance. In 1464 and 1467 at Seville the boys danced before the "Ark of the Sacrament," the cathedral's most precious treasure. This makes an explicit connection of dancing before the Eucharist with the dance of David before the Ark, as per the Ethiopian tradition. *For this dance the boys were also dressed as angels*, incontrovertible proof that these cathedral dances originate in the Angelic Dance as well as in the dances of David and Wisdom.

But alas, in 1613 they got new costumes, similar to soldier outfits, complete with shields and spears. Now they were soldiers of Christ. So, of course, are the angels in the timeless battle against Satan (Dan 11–12; Rev 12): but this was the time when Spain's *conquistadores* were building their empire, with appalling abuses of the indigenous peoples that evoked protests even at that time. Effectively, the dance of the angels led by Christ and the *cosmos* (order) which came from that were inverted, so that the earthly "Christian" state was the perfect *cosmos* with absolute imperial powers and rights. This was part of a wider tendency in Europe that was to have very harmful effects on the understanding of liturgy (see chap. 9).

With the general reaction against church dances, there were several attempts to end *Los Seises*, though an ingenious judgment from the Vatican saved them: the dances could continue as long as the costumes lasted—and they've been carefully repaired to this day![34] The boys no longer carry weapons, but the change of costume has severed the conscious link with the Angelic Dance.

Real Presence

We might say that this is all very fine for people who have a talent for dance, but what about the rest of us? The fact that the early Church seems to have practiced a choreographic consciousness of liturgy rather than "liturgical dance" means in fact that the Angelic Dance includes everyone. Just by walking in a procession we're taking part in the dance. And we're dancing if we're simply *present* to the movement of our bodies, present to the movement of the Body of Christ and taking in the music and the building "moving" around us. This is the same understanding as the teaching of the seven heavens, which through the gift of Wisdom reveals the depths of reality, the depths of the *present*.

In fact, the most basic level of professional dance is not movement, but *presence*. In Eliot Smith Dance Company, I work with the dancers on presence, because without it, the most sophisticated technique in the world is merely robotic. But if they're present, dancers will often speak of "going to another place"—like the ascent of Enoch, "Isaiah," and others who saw the cosmos as it really is.

But the busy, nonstop nature of urban life makes that a challenge, and losing the ability to be present to the depths of reality gradually erodes our sensitivity to nonphysical levels of reality—the "metaphysical" or "spiritual." One dance artist told me that he actually creates his works—which are strongly metaphysical—in order to try to resensitize people's brains to the spiritual realm.

The traditional proofs for the existence of God from reason are based on the arguments that for a thing to exist ultimately requires a Creator Being as well as the tendency of things to have an internal purpose, even if, like plants, they're unconscious.[35] But generally, these "proofs" no longer convince people who don't already believe in God.[36] Yet many spiritual but not religious people who've learned to dance or meditate or in some other way to become present often speak of having acquired a deeper sense of "some higher power," or a sense that "everything is interconnected," and "everything is for a purpose." This doesn't reveal the God of Jesus Christ

any more than the traditional proofs do: but it does bring us to an awareness of the divine, *and this through the senses*. The sixties guru Timothy Leary was of course referring to drugs when he said, "Get out of your mind into your senses," and he helped blight a generation (see chap. 2). But in themselves, his words aren't totally wrong: if we are to truly reason, we need to abandon cold, disembodied rationalizing and be present to our senses so we can actually hear what they're telling us. Perhaps this was the kind of reasoning St. Paul was thinking of when he said that since the creation of the world, God's invisible nature "has been clearly perceived in the things he has made" (Rom 1:20). It was Wisdom, after all, through whom God gave "unerring knowledge of what exists," and she is "a spotless mirror of the working of God" (Wis 7:17, 26).

Indeed, the cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner has challenged the common concept of "intelligence" as expressed by the IQ test (general knowledge, vocabulary, arithmetic, verbal reasoning, etc.) and demanded we recover other "intelligences," such as language-learning and *bodily-kinesthetic* intelligence (movement). He praises dance as reaching the greatest height of any use of the body of any culture, though underdeveloped in the West (or should we say, forgotten?).[37]

And many churches no longer have processions: people can expect to spend most or all of the service in the pew. But in fact the procession originates in the crowds following Jesus—he did much of his preaching and healing *on the move*. Part of the *process* of repentance, *metanoia*, looking at things differently, was actually brought about by the change of landscape: physically "going to another place." Accompanied by the riddles of Jesus' parables, the crowds were experiencing in a very everyday way a taste of what happened to those mystics who were taken by God through the heavens in the ascent of integration.

Explicit faith in Jesus as the Christ and full Christian commitment may have taken them years: this should give us patience and compassion toward those struggling on the edge of the Church.[38] The change of direction and change of heart, the coming into God's knowledge, which are the true meanings of repentance, *metanoia*, are all a process. Like dance, like *prayer*, a process takes place over time: and like the great prayer of the liturgy, the process of repentance involves the whole Church. In case we get stuck and immobilized ourselves, Wisdom may be showing us that those on the margins have sometimes integrated a "lower" heaven that the "committed" among us have missed out on!

Indeed, many devout people complain of distractions in prayer, that all their lives whirl around in their heads when they sit still to pray. Perhaps if we brought back the movement of our bodies to prayer, we'd be able to be

more still? I think of St. Dominic's Nine Ways of Prayer, which were gestures taken mostly from the liturgy.[39] Praying with our bodies, we'd be more in the Real Presence of Christ because we had let our dancing God lead us. The Greek Fathers of the Church used to speak about the Blessed Trinity as a *perichoresis*, a "going around,"[40] to express how there are Three Persons in One God—the movement within the God who is the Unmoved Mover, at rest, and causing all else to move. *Perichoresis* is commonly mistranslated as "dancing around," a confusion between the very similar Greek words for "go" and "dance," but on an experiential, spiritual level, it's not such a big mistake. God, as movement in rest, reconciles movement and rest in us.

In one of the liturgies of the monasteries of Mount Athos—the monks there have, of course, remembered the Angelic Dance in their spinning, fiery chandeliers—there is a moment when the "ecclesiarch" (the master of ceremonies or choir master) stands in front of the sanctuary screen (iconostasis), underneath the great chandelier. *And he stands on a twelve-point star* (figure 13). From the origins of this practice in the Pantokrator Monastery of Constantinople in the Middle Ages, we know that the star represents the zodiac.[41] What might at first sight look like a pagan hangover is in fact the deepest teaching about angels/stars, one that we need to understand if the Angelic Dance is to become part of our lives. It is in fact a teaching that Christ has overcome the fallen principalities and powers who broke out of the true dance. The dance teaches how to recognize the powers' influence on us and to overcome them in Christ.

Chapter 8
Overcoming the Stars

For images and video, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-8-overcoming-the-stars

If you leave Paris early in the morning and take the A75 autoroute toward the southwest, by lunchtime you'll reach the little town of Issoire in the Auvergne region, right in the center of France. It's one of those places where life is unhurried and the restaurants still serve simple, cheap, and delicious home cooking. At the heart of the town is the twelfth-century abbey church of Saint Austremoine (figure 1). One of its most striking features is the signs of the zodiac, all twelve of them (figures 2–4 and video 1[1]).

But what on earth is the zodiac doing on a church? "There shall not be found among you [. . .] anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer" (Deut 18:10). The Lord told Jeremiah that the diviners were deceivers (Jer 29:8). On the basis of these Scriptures, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts astrology together with palmistry and consulting clairvoyants as "conceal[ing] a desire for power over time, history and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers," and contradicting the honor we owe to God alone.[2]

In the window of a bookshop a couple of streets away from the abbey, I saw a book titled *Witches of the Auvergne*. This region, like much of central France, was notorious for witchcraft and a general resistance to evangelization. So perhaps the builders of the abbey thought they could tempt people into church by pragmatically accommodating "local traditions"? Of course, this would be compromising the first Commandment—"You shall have no false gods before me." But Christians have often sinned by compromising

with their generation. As we saw in the last chapter, at the time of the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the angel costumes of the boy dancers of Seville Cathedral were taken away and replaced with soldier outfits—an attempt to give spiritual legitimacy to oppression.

But if we look more closely at the zodiac and some of the other art in the abbey of Saint Austremoine, we see that this explanation is too simple. In figure 3, Libra, the Scales, is not just the traditional female figure, but a winged angel. She's more like the icon of Wisdom (figure 5, and see chaps. 5, 6). Furthermore, her exposed breast could be a sign of God's mercy, tempering justice. And Virgo (figure 4) holds a palm, associated with virginity, but is also enthroned in a manner similar to Wisdom and to so many medieval images of the Virgin Mary (figure 6). Could this be a Christian response to the knowledge of the fallen angels that was part of the local culture? Other images from the building suggest this. At the bottom left-hand corner of figure 1, we can see three eight-pointed stars surrounded by circles. As we know from chapter 5, in Christianity this is a symbol of resurrection, divinization, and sharing in the life of the angels. And when the church was restored in the 1850s, with a wonderful painted interior, the ceiling was covered in stars. Anatole Dauvergne painted a Christ in Glory, surrounded by a rainbow, the seven heavens (figure 7).[3] Given the local culture, all this is unlikely to be coincidental. While the cosmological tradition had largely disappeared by the end of the fifteenth century, it's possible that with the revival of interest in early Christian art and architecture during the nineteenth century, the clergy saw they had resources for combating the local tendency to witchcraft. In fact, it may be that this problem actually kept the cosmological tradition alive in the Auvergne.

The zodiac is to be found in Christian art right up to the sixteenth century. St. Hildegard of Bingen's paintings *The Universal Man* (figure 8, and see chap. 6) and her image of the year, *On the Working of God* (figure 9), have twelve figures (in four groups of three, according to the seasons) around the circle: these appear to be the signs of the zodiac. The famous *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (The very rich hours of the Duke of Berry), an illuminated book of daily prayer (1416), is replete with signs of the zodiac. The illustration of the "Anatomical or Zodiacal Man," otherwise called the "subtle body," shows the different signs of the zodiac influencing different organs (figure 10). And for each month, appropriate signs of the zodiac are shown in the top of the picture (e.g., January, figure 11). Chartres cathedral has a zodiac window—figure 12 shows Pisces, the Fish. As in the *Très Riches Heures*, the art links each sign with the activity of the time of year dominated by it, but also with its Christian significance. So, for example, harvest is linked with the eucharistic bread. There is also

an astronomical clock at Chartres that includes a zodiac (figure 13). There are similar clocks at Strasbourg, Münster (Germany), and many other cathedrals.

It seems, then, that the zodiac had some place in Christian cosmology. But before retracing the tradition, we're first going to look at why astrology is still so popular and how it works.

How Astrology Works

Life is full of uncertainty. Uncertainty makes us anxious. Anxiety, if it gets really bad, can be crippling. One of our greatest anxieties is about the future, simply because we have no way of knowing what will happen. The weather forecast can be helpful to us in planning our movements. But what if we had a way of knowing what was likely to happen in our work, our finances, or our love life? Astrology, which is found throughout the world's cultures, is based on the premise that the stars influence what happens here on earth. According to this belief, we tend to behave differently from each other because we were born under different star signs. Is there any scientific basis for this? Well, if we're anxious about the future, we may feel any kind of assistance is better than nothing! And in a lot of people's experience, astrology "works." So weekly, or even daily, horoscopes are found throughout the media.

The world's various cultures have developed their own astrological systems: Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian, Mayan, and Indian (Vedic). The stars have fascinated every people simply because they're there: so high up, so far away, and so amazingly beautiful. And, unlike with so many things on earth, *we can do nothing to change the stars*. So we're also a bit frightened of their power. Perhaps that's what inclines people to fatalism. Modern astrophysics has actually reinforced that fear, as we can observe the paths of comets and meteorites that could damage and even destroy our planet.

But from the earliest times there has always been a difference between popular and "professional" use of astrology. Modern astrologers, whatever we may think of their profession, emphasize two things. First, they don't reject science: they do know that the earth orbits the sun. Astrology is about the impact our *view* of the stars has on us. Second, they insist that the idea of astrological influence does *not* take away our free will.[4]

We do actually know that the gravitational pull exerted by the sun and moon govern ocean tides. It may be that the other stars also have some physical effect, and as we are physical bodies (like the oceans), the stars may indeed influence us more than we realize. In biodynamic gardening,

devised by Rudolf Steiner, planting and sowing is done according to the phases of the moon. A Benedictine monastery I know adopted this technique with impressive results.

And while we now know that influenza is caused by bacteria, not by the *influence* of the stars, it's still a basic truth that we need our brightest star, the sun, for light: long dark winters tend to depress us. More fundamentally, the relative position to the sun of where we live in the world governs our seasons, and thus our food supply: sowing and reaping, the fertility and maturing of cattle, and so on.

Astrology reads the night sky in terms of the influence of the planets and stars, their groupings, movements, and conjunctions. Each *planet* has a particular character: the sun, radiating light, represents our self-expression, both positive self-confidence and negative egocentricity. The moon, with its light and shadow sides, influences creative and destructive behavior; its waxing and waning influence growth and decline. Astrology links the moon with our emotions, a *lunatic* being a person on whom the lunar influence is so strong that it drives them insane. Mercury is seen to dart from one position to another in the sky and so is connected with both transitions and negative changeability (like a *mercurial* person). The god Mercury/Hermes was a messenger, so he's associated with travel, business, communication, and thought. Venus, the goddess of love, is about pleasures and passion—this may be true beauty and love or deception and seduction. Saturn has the longest cycle and so is Father Time, associated with old age, as well as with outcomes, positive or negative. A saturnine person is gloomy, aged before his or her time.

The zodiac consists of the twelve constellations of "fixed" stars—those seeming hardly to move—that touch the *ecliptic*, which is the path the sun appears to trace around the "equator" of the celestial sphere. These twelve constellations divide the night sky into twelve segments. They're called the "zodiac" after the Greek *zodiakos kyklos*, "animal circle," most of them being named after an animal (e.g., Aries = ram, Taurus = bull). The zodiac signs are *believed* to be stationary even though they seem to "rise" and "fall" over the sky depending on the position of the sun.

The interaction of planetary movement and static constellations sets up connections and more complex influences on earthly life: in the language of the Hermetic philosophers of Egypt, "as above, so below." So when Mercury, representing thought, is "in" adventurous Aries, thought translates to action. Some planets are said to "rule" certain signs because they share key qualities: Mars rules Aries, because both are "fire" signs. Signs of the zodiac are also seen as having polarities, like the Chinese yin and yang: the six "positive" signs, which include Aries and Aquarius, are associated with outward

activities—running, dancing, fighting, and so on. The six "negative" signs, which include Taurus and Pisces, are associated with more inward activities, such as resting, absorbing, and tempting. There are also the associations with the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Signs are further divided up into three categories: *cardinal*—associated with *hinge* times of the year and the start of seasons (Aries: spring), therefore signaling the beginning of new projects and "go-getting" people in general; *fixed*, associated with holding and perseverance, such as Taurus; and *mutable*, such as Gemini, because they occupy positions in the year when the seasons are changing; they're also associated with both flexibility and instability in people.

The signs of the zodiac divide the year, making them essential to birth-chart astrology. So Capricorn runs from December 22 to January 20, meaning that Christ, traditionally born on December 25, "is" a Capricorn. There are also the astrological "ages." The signs are seen to move very slowly backward (caused by a shift in the earth's position to the sun and the rest of the solar system), so an Age is the time taken for a sign to travel from and back to its original position. This lasts approximately 2,160 years. Christ was born in the Age of Pisces (the Fish: note all his fish miracles!), but depending on which astrological system they use, many astrologers think we are now moving into, or have moved into, the Age of Aquarius. Some people take this to mean that the Christian age is past (see chap. 2).

Signs of the zodiac have further associations with colors and minerals. Aries = Mars, god of war, is associated with anything fiery, and this is said to activate the sign in a person born "under" Aries.

In iconography, sixteen-point stars, which are rarer than eight- or twelve-point stars, represent the signs of the zodiac, plus the four seasons (thus the whole of time), or the four elements or the four cardinal points of the compass.

The *Houses* divide (equally or unequally, according to different systems) the "celestial globe" into twelve. The degree of celestial longitude rising above the eastern horizon at the moment of someone's birth is called the Ascendant and the first degree of the first House. Each of the twelve Houses represents a different part of us: the first House is personality, the second possessions, the fifth creativity, for example.

The *Aspects* are the angles between different planets as they pass through the different signs of the zodiac. An easy-flowing aspect or *trine* is 120 degrees. This can aid a project but also help spread a forest fire. *Opposition* (180 degrees) or *square* (90 degrees) are considered stressful: this can produce conflict but also mean different viewpoints on a problem contributing to its solution. And planets are in *conjunction* when they're close to each other (attracting or repelling, depending on their qualities).

With so many elements and movements making the stars like a great orchestra or dancing chorus, it's not surprising the ancients spoke of the "Music of the Spheres" or saw the stars as dancing angels. Putting them all together, an astrologer can assemble a birth chart or a horoscope for any time. While it may seem an arbitrary mix of elementary astronomy, the influence of appearances, and classical myth, many people say that in their *experience*, it makes sense of their lives, so it "works."

But isn't all this based on out-of-date science (such as the belief that the stars orbit the earth)—as well as arbitrary associations with classical myths? Surely, this is an example of how the brains God has given us *liberate* us from irrational fear of the stars? On the other hand, we've seen that at least the sun and moon exert gravitational pull on the earth. We can't simply dismiss as nonsense or superstition the accrued experience of many people and cultures who have spoken of astonishing fits between "their stars" and their lives. And simply as what we see (regardless of what actually *is*), the stars, like an advertisement, a painting, or a movie, influence us. Psychology has taught us that we don't get healed of a neurosis—even though, intellectually, we know it's irrational—by just telling ourselves, "I know it's not true."

But a deeper problem is that the sheer complexity of astrology means that, even assuming it's mostly true, being an astrologer requires a great deal of knowledge. Knowledge is power, and with knowledge one could deceive or manipulate (even more so because the choice of different astrological systems clearly contains a subjective element). It would be so easy to mix truth with a lie, as the serpent did in Eden. Which brings us to the Bible.

Wisdom of the Heavens and Fallen Stars

The exodus of Israel from Egypt is the founding story of the Jewish people. It's also taken up in Christianity as an image of baptism and resurrection: the *Transitus Paschalis*, or Easter crossover (see chap. 5). In leaving Egypt, Israel left a culture essentially run by astrology. It was a sophisticated but, as the Jews experienced, oppressive culture of rigid hierarchies and systems. When, by the Lord's command, Moses turned his rod into a serpent (a symbol of wisdom *or* deception), Pharaoh's magicians did the same "by their secret arts" (Exod 7:8-12). So in leaving Egypt, Israel was being liberated from magic.

Further back was Abraham: God called him when he lived in "Ur of the Chaldeans" (Gen 11:28; 12:1), who were synonymous with astrologers. And Chaldea was a name for Babylon and its region, where the Jews were

in captivity, and where the first five books of the Bible probably took their present shape. According to the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*, Abraham learned divination and astrology from his father. But having burned the house of idols and left Ur, he spent an entire night watching the stars to try to predict the rains for the coming year. Then "a word came into his heart": he realized that all the signs of heaven are in the hands of the Lord, so God could make it rain (note how God makes the sun and moon sit still in Josh 10:12-13 and moves the sun as a sign to Ahaz in 2 Kgs 20:8-11). Abraham prays to be saved "from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man" (Jubilees 11:8; 12:6-21[5]). So Abraham—and his descendants—are liberated from astrology.

Or from *predictive* astrology (see Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27): in Genesis 1:14-18, God makes the sun and moon, together with the stars "for *signs* and for seasons and for days and years," and in Jubilees it was Enoch, when he was taken up to heaven, who wrote a book on "the signs of the heaven according to the order of their months." From this would come the calendar of jubilees (Jubilees 4:17-19). Part of the first book of Enoch (72–82) is known as the "Astronomy Book." As we found in previous chapters, Enoch saw that stars are angels and angels are stars—as we also find in the book of Revelation. It was the fallen stars/angels who taught witchcraft to women and war to men (1 Enoch 7–8). But Joseph dreamed of the sun and moon and eleven stars (his father, mother, and brothers) all bowing down to him (Gen 37:9), from which the Jewish philosopher Philo concluded that the twelve tribes of Israel were to be identified with the twelve signs of the zodiac (see chap. 5), each patriarch now being a constellation, established and moving in the heavens. Their names were graven on two stones that held in place the high priest's ephod (tunic), and twelve jewels on the breast piece that represented the "sons of Israel," the twelve tribes (Exod 28:11, 15-22).[6]

When King Josiah purged the temple in response to the discovery of the book of the Law (probably Deuteronomy), he ordered Hilkiah the High Priest to purge the temple of the vessels made for Baal, Asherah, and the host of heaven. The priests who had burned incense to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of heaven (the angels) were deposed (2 Kgs 23:1-5). Yet the angel told Daniel that the "wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever" (Dan 12:3). And according to the Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37–100), the veil of the temple had woven on it a panorama of the heavens (which suggests that when the veil was torn in two at Jesus' death, the heavens were opened, see Rev 19:11). The seven lamps of the Menorah in the sanctuary represented the planets

and the twelve loaves on the table, the circle of the zodiac and the year.[7] And the apocryphal *Treatise of Shem*, written as if by Noah's son Shem but possibly dating from 30 to 20 BC, offers a description of the characteristics of each year according to the sign of the zodiac in which it begins.

What can we conclude? First of all, predictive astrology—trying to tell the future by the stars—is consistently forbidden by Scripture. Nevertheless, the stars could function as signs, especially for celebrating the liturgical feasts, insofar as these stars are ordained by God (the fallen stars/angels in Enoch went out of orbit and appeared at the *wrong times*, 1 Enoch 80:6). The temple priests may have started to *worship* angels rather than honor them. Rather than being priests of wisdom, shining like the stars/angels of God, the priests may have seized and twisted the knowledge as the fallen stars/angels did, practicing magic and trying to get control over the future. In doing so they would actually be believing that the future was not in God's Providence but determined by the stars/angels—good or bad.

The problem of worshiping angels would not go away. St. Paul forbids it (Col 2:18), and the Letter to the Hebrews goes to some length to demonstrate that Jesus is Son of God and not a mere angel (Heb 1:4-14).

The Powers and Principalities

The first Gentiles to whom Jesus was revealed were the Magi (Matt 2:1-12). Magi (singular *magus*, as in Simon Magus) were the priests of the Zoroastrian religion of Persia (Iran). This religion still exists, and astrology is an important part of it. Indeed, this religion was associated with *magi*c. Zoroastrianism was known to the Babylonians, especially since they were invaded by the Persian Cyrus, the same Cyrus who would let the captive Jews return to Jerusalem (Isa 45). While rites for the sun and moon are part of Zoroastrianism,[8] so also is a belief in a savior or saviors. Though human rather than divine and descended from Zoroaster, he (they) would be entrusted by God with the rehabilitation of the world and the final resurrection of the dead.[9] The Magi were clearly astrologers: they saw the star of the King of the Jews in the East (Matt 2:2). But they were not using astrology for their personal advantage: rather, they wanted to worship the King of the Jews (their savior), and so they were happy to let his star (a dancing angel?) guide them to *what they did not know.* Theirs was not the way of stolen knowledge but of wisdom. And therefore, as St. Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 329–389/390) says, at the very moment the Magi adored Christ, astrology came to an end, because the stars were now moving in the orbit Christ determined (cf. 1 Enoch 80:6).[10] Pope Benedict XVI comments:

> It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love—a Person.[11]

When the apostles asked Jesus for the time and the "sign" for the destruction of the temple, he spoke among other things of the sun and moon being darkened, "and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken" (Mark 13:24-25)—very much like the book of Revelation. Jesus also said that he "watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" (Luke 10:18) when the Seventy (the symbolic number of the world's nations) had been preaching and healing. All this suggests that the fall of Satan and his angels from heaven is not an event from before time began nor awaited in some *Independence Day*-style scenario. It's something *outside time*, in the depths of reality. There, in the depths of now, and the depths of *us*, a battle is raging between God and his angels and Satan and his angels (cf. Dan 11–12, Rev 12:7-9). This is a battle in the depths of reality *and therefore* in the depths of ourselves. This battle is manifested decisively when those who follow the way of unconditional love are persecuted out of fear. Indeed, St. Paul insists that the spiritual battle of the Christian life is not about contending against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the cosmic powers of the present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

The "powers and principalities"[12] are actually names for ranks of angels, not just for corrupt civil rulers (though it doesn't exclude them, as they're under the fallen angels' influence). The powers and principalities were created through Christ and for him (Col 1:16), and therefore were created good. He is the head of every rule and authority (Col 2:10) and is ascended far above them (Eph 1:21), which means that Christ has not just overcome and will in the end destroy all the wicked angels (1 Cor 15:24; cf. Rom 8:37-39), but that the good angels of those ranks are under his command.

In Ephesians 6:11-18 Paul says, "Put on the whole armor of God," including truth on the loins and the *breastplate* of righteousness. This recalls the passage in Exodus about the High Priest's ephod and jeweled breast piece on which were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Clement of Alexandria, commenting on Philo's reading of the priestly robes, connects the twelve apostles with the zodiac.[13] As we saw in chapter 5, the twelve-jeweled gates of the heavenly city (the ninth heaven, according to the presbyters) correspond to the jewels on the High Priest's breast piece, the apostles being the twelve foundations (Rev 21:10-21). It was the twelve apostles, who had

transmitted the true Knowledge of Christ, who would shine like bright stars (cf. Dan 12:3, above), unlike the "wandering stars" (Jude 13).

Above all, the patriarchs, the apostles, and all the redeemed in heaven have *overcome the influence of the fallen stars*. Revelation, amid its terrifying descriptions of cosmic upheaval and war in the heavens, celebrates the casting down of Wormwood and all the fallen angels (Rev 8:10-11; 12:7-12). The victorious Christ holds the seven stars in his hands, as if to say he has overcome the influence of the planets (1:16).[14] He has "overcome the world" (literally, "the cosmos"; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4).

And John sees in heaven a "great sign," a *semeion*, the word for an astrological portent. The sign is the woman (Rev 12:1-6). We saw in chapter 5 how she is Wisdom, Mary (the sign of Virgo), and the Church. Clothed in the light of the sun and standing on the moon, she has overcome the moon's dark side. The crown of twelve stars suggests that instead of being oppressed by the signs of the zodiac, she has fully integrated them: they rest above the "crown" or "divine" chakra (see chap. 5), which corresponds to the seventh heaven and the gift of Wisdom. Her apparent defeat by the dragon, in fact, anticipates the decisive victory of Michael and his angels.

A Christian Astrology?

Clement of Alexandria's connection of the twelve apostles with the signs of the zodiac may well be part of authentic Christian *gnosis*, because the Gnostics had said that "the twelfth dances on high" and the number twelve was the Human Being and the Church.[15] All those who have been taken up with Christ are dancing with the angels/stars. One version of the Christian apocryphon (2 Enoch 21:4-6) has a ninth heaven that is the home of the constellations that lie "above and behind" the twelve groups of stars seen in the night sky. Perhaps they're the angels of the physical zodiac. When the initiates of Dura-Europus saw the *twelve*-pointed stars representing the sun and moon (figure 14) in the baptistery, they would immediately have associated them with astrology, given the culture they lived in. The questions this raised for them would be answered in mystagogy, the "second initiation," with a teaching about *overcoming* the influence of the fallen stars, the powers and principalities, to share in the knowledge of the angels of God. They might already have heard about Jesus' teaching on guardian angels which each of the "little ones" has (Matt 18:10). The "Easter crossover" of baptism would be a liberation from the "Egypt" of astrology and magic.

The ambient culture of astrology was a great challenge for the early Church: the C*lementine Recognitions*, as we've already seen, describe

St. Peter's debates with the magician Simon *Magus* (cf. Acts 8:9-24) as well as other dialogues, such as between the convert Clement and his philosopher father. In a passage which recalls the *Book of Jubilees*, Clement says that Abraham recognized from the order of the stars that they're regulated by God's Providence. The Egyptians are praised for their observation of the stars, but condemned for worshiping idols. The astrology of the Zoroastrians is strongly criticized—Zoroaster is identified rather unkindly with Ham, one of Noah's sons, as being the ancestor of magicians, and he perishes because of his dark arts. Ham's descendants also became the people of Egypt (cf. Ps 106:22).

Origen (184/185–254) accepted the influence of the stars and their use in weather forecasting and said they were the *angels, sun, moon, and stars* which "the Greeks" (such as Plato) called the visible and perceptible gods (see chap. 7). It was precisely because Christians hoped to shine like stars (Dan 12:3) that they don't worship the stars/angels but rather join them in worshiping God (cf. Deut 1:10; 4:19-20). Origen actually calls the stars "heralds" (literally, "angels") of God.[16]

The real concern is that astrology makes people fatalistic: Mars *made* someone a murderer. So neither can we be responsible for sin—which is disproved by the self-evident truth that we have free will[17]—nor can any *saving change* take place in their lives.

When the Church suddenly found itself changed from persecuted minority to state religion in the fourth century, the battle intensified. Children were baptized as a matter of course, but as soon as a baby was born, the midwife would still rush off to the astrologer to find out his/her "fate." Almost all the Christian preaching against astrology from this period on attacks the fatalism of popular astrology. St. Augustine was so worried about the fatalism of popular astrology that he rubbishes even the idea that the stars could have influence.[18]

But Zeno of Verona (ca. 300–371/380) took a different approach. In a sermon to the newly baptized, he proposed a new, Christian zodiac: so Aries, the Ram, is Christ the Lamb (Rev 5:6). Taurus, the Bull, is replaced by the tender calf (the fatted calf that was slaughtered on the return of the Prodigal Son [Luke 15:23]; and the Ox, one of the four Living Creatures [Rev 4:6-9], etc.). Cancer is an incurable arrogance and greed. Leo is a lion cub (from Gen 49:9): Christ is the "Lion of Judah, the Root of David, [who] has conquered, so that he can open the book and its seven seals" (Rev 5:5). Gemini, the Twins, are the Old and New Testaments: we celebrate the sacraments of Christ who lay down and slept (see "the lion will lie down with the lamb," Isa 11:6) to conquer death. The Virgin proclaimed the Balance (Libra) in giving flesh to the Son, so that he would bring justice on earth. Whoever

is faithful to Christ will be able to step on any serpent (cf. Mark 16:18; Isa 11:8). "I won't say, 'the Scorpion,'" adds Zeno, perhaps thinking of the lethal scorpion-like creatures in Revelation 9:10 or Jesus' words about fathers not giving their sons a scorpion in place of an egg (Luke 11:12). The faithful Christian will never fear the devil as Sagittarius (archer) with his poisoned arrows or Capricorn (goat), bringing all kinds of poison, insanity, and deadly sin. Christ Aquarius (the Water-bearer) destroys the devil's works by means of baptism. And Pisces, the two fish, are the Jews and Gentiles, made one by baptism[19]—which casts an interesting light on the fish and loaves miracles.

At first sight, this might seem a bit forced, not unlike "Christian yoga," which replaces supposedly "pagan" gestures with "Christian" ones like the cross. But as we've seen, astrologers consider each star signs to have a good and bad influence. Zeno is therefore talking about what happens when these "powers and principalities" are brought into submission to Christ, which is what the newly baptized have just committed to in their lives. So, for example, the dark side of Gemini—instability—is not destroyed but *redeemed* as flexibility and harmonization, the *harmonization* of what could be conflicting and destabilizing (remember Wisdom *harmozousa*, the choir mistress/choreographer?): Old and New Testaments *together* form the Word of God.

Many of the signs of the zodiac are found in the visions of Revelation: as Stratford Caldecott says, in Hebrew astrology, the Lion, the Man (Aquarius), the Bull (ox), and the Eagle (the Hebrew equivalent of Leo) "form a square around the zodiacal cross formed by the solstices and equinoxes, dividing the circle of the ecliptic into four sections of ninety degrees."[20] And Zeno's scheme fits extraordinarily well the depictions of Libra at the abbey of Issoire: the Virgin proclaimed the Balance in giving flesh to the Son, and both signs at Issoire recall Wisdom. Indeed, what we have from Zeno may reflect some of the early Christian teaching about "the Twelve" that Clement of Alexandria mentions but doesn't spell out. And by the time Zeno's contemporary St. Jerome was producing his Latin ("Vulgate") translation of the Scriptures, he would translate Galatians 5:22-23 as giving *twelve* fruits of the Spirit: "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity."[21]

In the same period, St. Martin of Tours (316–397), according to Sulpicius Severus, who knew him, was doing everything the magicians could do—such as calming storms—but better.[22] His biographer was "claiming" territory for Christ, breaking down the strongholds of the devil and his angels—like the battles between Simon Peter and Simon Magus.

In the sixth century, St. Caesarius of Arles preached against the soothsayers, arguing that their advice should be rejected even if they're telling the truth—presumably because they had the fallen angels' knowledge. Instead,

Caesarius invokes the Cosmic Cross: raised up on high, the cross is powerful against the demons of the air. Astrology was again condemned by the Council of Braga (560–565) in response to the Priscillian neo-Gnostic sect.[23] There seems to have been an interest in astrology in Judaism during the same period: the sixth-century synagogue of Beit Alpha has a zodiac floor (figure 15).

But the sixth century also marked a change in approach with regard to evangelization. St. Bede (672/673–735) tells us that Pope Gregory the Great advised St. Mellitus not to destroy the English pagan temples (which often, of course, required military might) but to reconsecrate them, just making sure to remove anything idolatrous.

Bede himself was a good astronomer and offers a method for determining the course of the moon through the zodiac. He accepts that the stars influence the weather but does not mention human beings. St. Isidore of Seville (560–636), while condemning astrology as fatalistic, allows the observation of the stars by farmers, travelers, pilots—and clergy.[24] Astronomy was needed for calculating the date of Easter, chosen with astronomical symbolism in mind. Easter is the nearest Sunday to the vernal equinox, that is, the time when the night and day are equal length and the day is increasing. This is the risen Christ decisively overcoming the powers of darkness, concluding what began at Christmas, the winter solstice, when the days stopped shortening and started lengthening again.

But while the Church made good use of astronomy, superstitious practices—whether tying rags on trees or the use of apparently magical properties found in certain seeds—were never completely eradicated. Superstition will always arise where anxiety and pain are stronger than faith and reason. In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas again addressed the question of the stars' influence. In line with the consistent tradition, he condemns predictive astrology but believes that the stars could indeed influence human behavior. He argues, however, that wise people can surmount a negative astral influence, while the reason that many astrological predictions come true is that the majority of the human race doesn't resist the stars' influence because they're not wise.[25] Aquinas does not make the connection between stars and angels, but we can see in his thought Wisdom (she who makes us wise) overcoming the distorted knowledge of the fallen stars/angels.

The whole teaching is in fact very simply summed up in an inscription on the astrological clock of Münster cathedral:

> The stars rule human beings
> But God rules the stars.
> The stars pay heed to God,
> And God pays heed to the prayers of the devout.

Surely our prayers against the negative influence of the planets and stars are answered in the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit that grow from the seven gifts. Or is that a bit simplistic?

Healing the Shadow of the Moon

A Christian psychotherapist I know believes there's a specifically "Christian" neurosis: the refusal to acknowledge the darkness. There is only light. When she first told me this, I was baffled: surely ours is a religion of the cross, of sin, repentance, and forgiveness? If anything, a lot of Christians, especially in the West, could look a bit more "risen"!

What she means is this. There are many Christians, especially the more committed, who are genuinely very good people. They're utterly regular at church and often shoulder heavy responsibilities there. They pray every day, are devoted to their family and friends, and strive to love everyone. They study their faith, share it with others, go on retreat, and receive spiritual accompaniment. They work hard and honestly and are always the first to volunteer. *But they're not able to accept their dark side.* They know their sins; they know the flaws in their characters. But the light must win, Christ has risen, so they fight. They may be aware that the sins come from hurts and may seek therapy. But sin is bad, and pain and sorrow are debilitating when there's so much good work to do for God, so they fight all the harder. And it doesn't work. Anger, depression, and burnout are the usual results.

In Jungian psychology, this constitutes a refusal to accept our "shadow." The shadow, welling up from the unconscious, needles the shiny public ego, "the me I want them to see." And the more we fight the shadow and repress it, the more it drives us. Without knowing it, we're a perpetual battleground, and this is exhausting. The solution, according to Jung, is to acknowledge our shadow with compassion, though this is not without its problems.[26] It doesn't mean saying that it's fine to sin: but it *is* fine and right to acknowledge that we have darkness in our lives that needs healing. When the Prodigal Son returns to his father, his father does not deny him, but welcomes him with open arms.

If we don't acknowledge our shadow compassionately, we are literally in a Satanic situation: *Satan* means "accuser" or "opponent." Our shadow side accuses us all day long (Rev 12:10), and we're in a situation of internal opposition. We are not in the process of integration. *Without knowing it, we are under the influence of the fallen stars/angels.* Remember from chapter 3 that sin is not primarily something we *do*, it's something we *fall into.* It's the "sin of the world" that hurts us and by which we hurt other people and

the rest of creation. But when we acknowledge our shadow side, we allow what's buried in our unconscious to rise to the surface, into the light. Like the newly baptized rising from the waters in Dura-Europus (see chap. 5), *we see the stars as they really are*.

In fact, this is *metanoia,* having a change of heart: we're starting to know ourselves a bit more as God knows us—and he knows us with love for us, the Knowledge of Wisdom. Remember that Thomas Aquinas said that the wise person can resist the negative influences of the stars. Now sharing in Wisdom's Knowledge, we're overcoming in Christ the powers and principalities. The shadow side is not destroyed but redeemed, restored to the dance of the angels of God. So, to take the earlier example of Gemini, its dark or shadow side—instability—is not destroyed but *redeemed* as flexibility and harmonization.

Perhaps this is an unnoticed dimension of Jesus' invitation to "fish for people" (Matt 4:19): raising to the surface what is hidden in the depths of the sea. As "risen fish," we are true Christians: the Greek *ICHTHYS,* fish, was an early Christian acronym (chap. 5). So truly, as St. Gregory of Nazianzen and Pope Benedict said, astrology ends with Christ. The ending has begun and it will be completed when we and the whole creation are totally sanctified. In the meantime, we see that we and others are in a lifelong process, in the movement of Wisdom's dance.

Realizing this gives us patience toward ourselves and others. Indeed, human relationships often fail because our attractions are based on our unacknowledged shadow side. A significant number of marriages break up because the woman has "married" her father or the man his mother: Jesus says that a man will leave his mother and father and is joined to his wife (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7), and whoever does not hate his parents and family cannot follow Christ (Luke 14:26). Only those who have repented, who are journeying into the heavens and growing in knowledge of self and cosmos, can know true love and not be trapped by the apparent security of a past from which they need to move on.

Cosmology, Sanity, and Artists

Might Christian knowledge of the stars have something to say about mental illness, what used to be called *lunacy*? Take the case of Estamira, about whom Marcos Prado made a compassionate documentary film in 2004. A grandmother diagnosed with chronic psychosis, Estamira lives in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, leading a group of older people who glean an existence from the garbage dumps outside the city. Estamira's happy

working-class family life was wrecked by her husband's serial affairs. When she refused to tolerate this anymore, he threw her and the children out and they descended into poverty. After she was raped twice in the dark alleys of the slums, Estamira began to lose her mind—but also to construct a cosmology. She believes that the "astro-bodies" violated her. She rails against the "Punster" who is "wise in reverse." The "gods" control the world. "Comet" means "commander," and the comets and the moon are not actually in the sky, but on the earth: you just see their reflections in the sky. Estamira believes that she reveals the truth and *is* the truth, but also knows that sometimes she's lucid and sometimes not.

This is extraordinarily close to what Enoch saw. The fallen stars took human women, having stolen and distorted the true knowledge. So they're not offering true Wisdom. Angels are also sometimes called "gods" (Ps 82:1). Fallen angels inspire the evil in the world (and we all have our "demons"). In Enoch's visions, the angels control the stars and elements. And of course if these angels are fallen, they will be on the earth and not in the sky.

Critics might say that rather than validating Enoch's cosmology, it rather suggests that the writer who called himself Enoch was psychotic, and that the Church did well to keep his books out of the Bible. But in that case, why is the "fallen angels" cosmology so present in Revelation and alluded to by Jesus himself (e.g., "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning")? It's there because it describes a fallen, *sinful* world: a world whose bonds are broken. Estamira is a victim of the sin of the world: infidelity and then rape broke apart the bonds of her mind. But a strange fruit is Estamira's insight into the cause of the evil which she suffers from every day.

It would of course be simplistic and arrogant to suggest that simply by returning to Christ (she rejects Christianity), Estamira would be healed. I said in chapter 5 that we need to be wary of a Christianity that simply offers a "good life" here on earth and doesn't take the reality of suffering and persecution seriously. St. Paul reminds us that the whole of creation is groaning in labor, waiting to be set free, and we too live in hope "for the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:21-23). A religion of unconditional love and uncompromising justice is a radical threat to a world which is trapped by what, after all, is the sin of the world. The first reaction to the offer of salvation is often fear. This fear can be manifested violently (all the more with the inspiration of the Evil One). Because God wants all humanity to be saved, our world needs time. Two thousand years so far, and counting.

The lives of artists might help us understand this mystery. We've seen that much of the Christian cosmological tradition has been transmitted in paintings and mosaic, music and dance. Artists are proverbially crazy. Some artists are very sensible, "normal" people, but it is undeniable that there's a significant

incidence of mental illness among the artistic community. There are famous cases like Vincent van Gogh and Mark Rothko, and back in the seventeenth century the poet John Dryden wrote, "Great wits are sure to madness near allied / And thin partitions do their bounds divide."[27] I've seen this as an artists' chaplain, encountering in particular bipolar disorder. Bipolarity (formerly called manic depression) is manifested in being either "high" or "low" in mood, but seldom if ever in the middle. Highs can be times of intense, productive creativity (and also irritability): lows mean depression, inertia, and despair. Sometimes the sufferer is both high and low at once. There are different grades of bipolar disorder—the mildest is sometimes called cyclothymia.

Of course, we can try to change perspectives by saying that rather than some artists being bipolar, some people who suffer from bipolar disorder are very creative. But it doesn't take away from the fact that it's a painful, often debilitating illness and can wreck relationships. Why are artists seemingly so at risk? Social factors play a big part. In Western society artists occupy a marginal position and seldom have steady income. This hardly nurtures psychological stability and is a very different arrangement from traditional societies. All the arts are integral to religion in traditional societies, and so artists have a clear social as well as religious status. The Bards of the Irish Golden Age (eighth century) were not just wandering poets: to qualify as bards they had to pass through the structured education of bardic schools. They were remembered as advisers to the king through the prophetic power of their poetry:[28] in modern terms, this made them senior government officials or opinion-forming journalists.

In the Middle Ages, the Church was a major patron of the arts (probably, at least to begin with, because the arts were the main way of transmitting the cosmological knowledge). So musicians, sculptors, and painters had relatively stable income and status. In all these historical cases artists were less free than now, but the evolution within medieval art shows that within boundaries they could still be creative.

But today, even for successful artists, a major hazard is "afterward." They work intensively up to a performance and exhibition—and then life goes back to "normal." Now what? A choreographer friend of mine, Katrin Kelly, talks of "coming down the mountain" (like Peter, James, and John after the transfiguration). Much of my pastoral care of artists revolves around helping them safely down from the high of performance. It can be as simple as a party afterward, or a picnic the next day, so no one's left empty and lonely—like God's "feast of fat things" for all peoples on his holy mountain (Isa 25:6).

This, as well as my own work as a musician and writer, has made me more aware of what is going on in the artistic process. In something as

apparently simple as painting an angel, the artist is revealing something in the heavens, the invisible depths of reality. *And in Revelation, the heavens are a battleground between the angels of God and the fallen angels of Satan.* Creating art is not pretty and fun (though, thanks be to God, it has its fun moments): if the result is beautiful, a sign of "all things made new" in Christ, it's only because a battle has been won, perhaps a battle of painful insights about the world. The clearly bipolar sculptor Benedict Fludd, in A. S. Byatt's novel *The Children's Book*, complains, "I have no will. [. . .] I am a battleground simply, and yet I live and walk about in the world." He complains that God "strides in and out" of his life.[29]

Artists have long been interested in spirituality and mysticism, perhaps because both seek to reveal the depths of reality. The composers Alexander Skryabin and Claude Debussy, choreographer Rudolf Laban, painters Paul Ranson (1864–1909) and Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), and, of course, Rudolf Steiner and his circle are just a few examples of artists interested in spiritual cosmologies of a Gnostic or esoteric kind. Not finding them in the Church, they understandably looked elsewhere: but to enter the invisible depths of the cosmos is to enter a battleground of angels and demons. In her terrifying book *City of Secrets*,[30] Patrice Chaplin tells what she claims is the true story of a secret order of esotericists in Girona, Catalonia, who used Kabbalah to try to achieve the heavenly ascent. Over the centuries some had died from this while others lost their minds. The group she encountered in the 1950s and 1960s showed anything but the genuine, practical love of neighbor that the early Church required as a condition of initiation (see chap. 5): instead, they were factional, self-centered, and unstable.

But aren't some Christians like this too? Although a recent study claims to have found that spiritual but not religious people are more likely to be suffering from mental illness than those who describe themselves as religious,[31] I'm not really convinced by this. Many people say they're religious, but their commitment is quite varied: they may be just "tribally" Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and so on. People who call themselves "spiritual" have made a personal choice to be so. In church, I've met brave souls who are mentally ill, have sought refuge in church, and are very self-aware, growing in holiness as they seek healing; I have met Christians who are mentally ill and too frightened to accept treatment, as well as Christians who are mentally ill and in denial—sometimes for fear of stigma; and Christians who are mentally ill and whose behavior is deeply destructive.

What *does* make a difference in the response to mental illness of a committed churchgoer and a spiritual but not religious person is that the spiritual but not religious person is essentially on his or her own. He or she may take a spiritual path that is dangerous, with no one to offer a word

of sane warning. By the grace of God, he or she may be kept safe from all these risks. But the Christian, at least, belongs to a religion that, however imperfectly lived out, is about community. Jung, who had a very difficult relationship with his own church, saw a psychological need for a wisdom greater than ourselves to lift us from our distress. This, he saw, was the role of clergy or philosophers: but where good, honest people could not find wisdom in religion, they could, in his experience as a psychiatrist, easily fall into neurosis, which he saw as being at war with oneself.[32]

Indeed, the Gnostics, who for whatever reason decided to leave the community of the Church, have cosmologies that are often complex and distorted—muddled versions of what we now know to be Christian cosmology. We could think of Estamira when we read St. Irenaeus's criticisms of the hypercomplex cosmology of the Gnostic Valentinus, in which, for example, the Mother of the Cosmos is eightfold and twelvefold as well as Earth, Jerusalem, Holy Spirit, and Lord. Irenaeus says that we might as well have the world coming to be by pumpkin and superemptiness emitting cucumber.[33] In other words, all this might as well be projection and invention. It does not have the healing touch of revelation passed down in a community of eyewitnesses (see chap. 3). It cannot give the liberation that comes about when I see things as God sees them, rather than just the production of my whirling, demon-driven mind. It could be that the Gnostics—even if many of them left the Church for all the usual, so human, so understandable reasons—may have been mentally ill, and like Estamira, created a cosmology from their illness. We can see from this why the early Church was so cautious about teaching the cosmological knowledge of Jesus Christ: Jude (13) warns against "wandering stars" who give wrong teaching.

But there is a much deeper truth here. It is not safe to try to ascend the heavens on our own. That is a self-centered occupation, and it may drive us insane. There are demons in those heavens as well as angels. And this is the uniqueness of Christianity: ours is not a "bottom-up" religion of self-improvement. Ours is a top-down religion: God came down, through the heavens, became incarnate as one of us, and ascended as a risen human being so that we could safely ascend through the heavens. A cosmos damaged and broken by fallen angels could only be healed by a savior God.

So great is our savior God that he does not come as a magician, waving his wand to make everything fine for the children again. He makes us children of God, which means we're no longer "enslaved to the elemental spirits of the universe," but "if a child then also an heir" (Gal 4:3, 7). Through the lifelong process of *metanoia*, in which we *accept the grace* of the risen life, we come to share in everything God is and has, including his knowledge of the cosmos. In the Cosmic Cross of Sant' Apollinare, Ravenna, we see

the cosmos transformed (figure 16). Looking more closely (figure 17), an act of *metanoia*, we see that at the bottom of the cross is *Salus Mundi*, salvation/healing of the world; and at the top is ICHTHYS, fish. Christ the Fisherman has raised our unconscious up to the highest consciousness, the highest knowledge. And at the center of the cross (figure 17) is the head of Christ himself, haloed with the rainbow of seven heavens; and the cross is set on a background of stars. He has overcome the stars. And as we continue to gaze, we see that he is what we are becoming: people who have overcome the fallen world and made it beautiful again.

The "ecclesiarch" (master of ceremonies) I mentioned in chapter 7 stands on a twelve-point star, symbolically overcoming the influence of the fallen angels, the principalities. It's no coincidence that this happens in the liturgy.

Chapter 9
Wisdom's Liturgy

For images, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-9-wisdoms-liturgy

The Hidden Thread

Liturgy is weird. How did we ever get from the Last Supper, an intimate meal with Jesus' closest friends in which he miraculously transformed simple bread and wine and taught the mystery of love to a complex ritual involving candles, bells, incense, exotic robes, and solemn music, all performed by a chosen few? Some Evangelical churches have abandoned ritual and liturgy altogether. Those churches that have a liturgical tradition may be sharply divided over liturgical style. To keep everyone (reasonably) happy, different forms of the liturgy may have to be celebrated. Unity in diversity? Not if diversity is a source of tension. Sometimes, one group of parishioners is very reluctant to attend the other group's service.

In Western Christianity, the question of liturgy has been around for a long time: the Liturgical Movement sprang up in the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the twentieth century with the aim of helping people to engage more with the liturgy and develop a more mature spirituality. The result was the liturgical reforms that took place during the 1950s and 1960s, culminating with the reforms of Vatican II. These reforms have strongly influenced the Episcopal and Anglican churches.

Many were and are happy with the reforms. But others felt they either needed to be more fully developed or that didn't go far enough. Such people often created experimental liturgies to connect their faith better

with their life circumstances: women's liturgies, student liturgies, ethnic liturgies, eco-liturgies. A particularly striking example is the *Missa Campesina Nicaragüense* ("Nicaraguan Peasants' Mass"), composed by Carlos Mejia Godoy and first performed in 1975. Godoy was a member of the Solentiname artists' community, established by the priest-poet Fr. Ernesto Cardenal. Its members were strongly inspired by folk art and liberation theology, which puts Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of heaven and the poor in dialogue with the Marxist idea of class struggle, applying this actively to situations of injustice. Base communities are established and unjust structures and leaders denounced and opposed, using force if necessary. Much of Latin America had and still has serious social inequality, and "the Church" is often identified in practice with the wealthy, military-backed upper classes. The tuneful, folky songs of the *Missa Campesina* celebrate Christ the comrade worker, stretching out his arms on the cross to defend the people against the rulers who exploit them and setting them free by the power of his resurrection. The *Missa Campesina* was banned within days of its first celebration.

Surprise, surprise, we might say. But a serious criticism is that these songs, great and true though they may be, are simply projecting onto the Mass rather than entering into its mystery. They forget about the salvation of souls. But is the so-called "solemn" Mass any better? Isn't it just grand opera and court ceremonial imposed by an oppressive ruling class and celebrated ever since Christianity became the state religion in the fourth century? Awe the people into submission, and allow them sentimental devotions as compensation.

But some of the most enthusiastic fans of the *Missa Campesina* and liberation theology are middle-class academics, while solemn Latin Masses are often loved by older working-class people, many of whom had been choristers. Younger people searching for "mystery" in worship are often attracted to solemn Masses as well.

I told you that liturgy was weird, didn't I? Like art, it seems beyond analysis. But could it be that the cosmological knowledge that was forgotten *and* partly transmitted in the liturgy might help us understand how to celebrate liturgy? Often in liturgy, we do something because it says so in the liturgy book, but we don't know why. I wonder sometimes if young people get bored in church because it actually comes across that we don't understand what we're doing: we move without the "real presence" of dancers (see chap. 7).

In previous chapters, we saw how much Christian cosmology has been passed down in the liturgy—in hymns (the singing of "holy voices"), gestures, and movement (the Angelic Dance), all guided by Wisdom the choir

mistress and choreographer—even the times and dates of celebrations. All of it was the prayer of a community of unconditional love that was overcoming in Christ the powers and principalities so that all things might be made new (Rev 21:5).

But Christian cosmology, Wisdom's Knowledge, has been *forgotten*. Are we, then, celebrating the liturgy without Wisdom? If so, could the cosmology we've recovered help us understand and celebrate the liturgy in a way that unites and inspires rather than (too often) divides and bores? This isn't another proposal for liturgical reform. Rather, it's a proposal to help us understand and celebrate better what we already have.

The Cosmic Temple

Christ's great sacrifice of atonement, the at-one-ment that is the true re-ligion or *binding back together* of the broken creation, had its roots in the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) still celebrated by the Jews. That day, in the temple liturgy, the High Priest would go alone into the Holy of Holies and say the name of God, YHWH. The Jews, who consider the name too holy to be spoken, say it as "Lord" (*'Adonai*), but it literally means "He Who Is," or "He Who Causes to Be." Enoch saw that the name was the oath that binds the universe together (1 Enoch 69:14-26).

And the holy of holies was the hidden place (*'alam*) that sounded (remember that the Scriptures were primarily to be *sung*, not read) like *'olam*, which means "ever," "eternity," and "world."[1] Eventually, the two words became interchangeable, not only because they sounded similar but also *because the priests, especially those on whom the Lord had shone his face* (cf. Num 6:25), *would have known that the meanings were connected*: the holy of holies was the place where the secrets of creation and eternity were to be known.

One of the High Priests was Simon, son of Onias, who repaired the temple and fortified the city. When he came out of the sanctuary with the people gathered around him, he looked like the morning star, the sun and the full moon, "and like the rainbow gleaming in glorious clouds" (which recalls to us the seven heavens), and like "*fire* and incense in the censer" (Sir 50:5-9). Enoch saw that God dwelt in fire; and, of course, incense is connected with Wisdom (Sir 24:15).

Simon put on a "glorious robe" (Sir 50:11) to enter the sanctuary. We saw in chapter 7 that the jewels on the High Priest's robe represented the twelve patriarchs and the signs of the zodiac. It was the philosopher Philo who knew this. Josephus knew that the twelve loaves on the table in the

sanctuary represented the zodiac, and the seven branches of the menorah represented the seven planets. Both men came from priestly families.

The High Priest's robe is first described in Exodus 28, which is part of a long passage (Exod 25–40) in which the Lord tells Moses how to make the tabernacle. The Lord's orders are executed by skilled artists and craftsmen. Although it's set in the desert—after Israel has "passed over" from Egypt, the land of magic—it fits with what Josephus tells us about the temple sanctuary. The curtains of the tabernacle were to be made of "fine twined linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarn" with cherubim worked into them (Exod 26:1). The linen represented the earth (because made from a plant), the blue the air, the purple the sea (because the dye was made from sea shells), and the scarlet was fire: the four elements. And they were woven into a panorama of the heavens.[2]

There is some evidence that the temple was structured according to the days of creation. As Moses set it up in Exodus 40, the holy of holies corresponds to day one, creation, the place of the original unity: *so when the High Priest said the name of God in the holy of holies, he prayed for the broken bonds of creation to be restored to their original oneness*. The veil represented the heavens which God created on day two. Two is the number of division: the veil is the divider between heaven and earth. So the table outside the veil is where bread was offered, which is the fruit of the *earth* (the earth's vegetation was created on day three). The menorah or lampstand is next, representing day four (the sun and moon and great luminaries); then, the golden altar of incense (which goes up in the *air* like the birds of day five); then, the altar of burnt offering (the beasts) which the priests (humankind) would offer (day six). The courts of the temple beyond would be where the people gathered on the sabbath (day seven).[3]

The holy of holies itself was a cube, lined with gold to represent the fire around God's throne (see Exod 25:17-20; Ezek 1). In Pythagoras's cosmology there was a fiery cube at the center of the universe called the *tetraktys* ("fourfold"), which was also the most binding oath. Scholars have puzzled over this strange symbol, which is not found in Greek mythology.[4]

On the mountain Moses received the law, which was what the people had to do in order to keep creation in harmony—of which they were, of course, part. And he was told to make the tabernacle "after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain" (Exod 25:40). On earth as it is in heaven.

Moses was in the holy of holies on the mountain: his face shone when he came down (Exod 34:35). According to the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees*, the Angel of the Presence told Moses all the secrets of creation on the mountain. It also says Noah "knew" that Eden was the holy of holies

(Jubilees 8:18). And the Jubilees creation story begins with God *renewing* the heavens and the earth, and the sun and moon. On the first day God creates the heavens, earth, waters, *and* "the spirits which minister before him," which include the angels of the clouds, darkness, snow, hail, and all the elements, seasons, times of day, and creatures (Jubilees 1:29; 2:1-3), and they all praise him. All these elements are similarly remembered in Wisdom 7 and Sirach 43, and this order of creation is remembered in the Benedicite (Dan 3:35-68).

According to the Jewish apocryphon *The Second Book of Baruch*, written after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, Moses was taught on the mountain the measurements of Zion, the measure of fire, the weight of the winds, and the number of raindrops (2 Baruch 59:4-12). These were the measures, the limits, of a well-functioning city and ecosystem: the flourishing economy that comes from environmental and social justice.

Put all that together, and we see the sacrificial liturgy of the temple was not about appeasing an angry God but about praying in a building that was a microcosm of creation. The building was constructed according to the knowledge that Wisdom gave, and the prayer was for God to restore the bonds of creation. Guided by Wisdom, the people were to observe the law, not as an end in itself, but that they might know the re-creation, peace, and harmony of Sabbath. And nature would rejoice with humankind that justice had been done (Isa 14:8).

But the vision was not fulfilled. Perhaps because the priests had played with the knowledge of the fallen angels and deserted Wisdom, the purification of the temple through the rediscovery of the law was needed. But the baby may have been thrown out with the bathwater. It's quite likely that in the holy of holies, as in Eden, there was originally the symbol of the tree of life, but it had become an idol and was thrown out.[5] The law came back with a bang, but as an absolute, devoid of Wisdom's harmonious interpretation. When God took pity on his people and entered the world to become like us in all things but sin, not only was the ancient cosmology of the temple restored but also the human vocation was raised to a new level.

The Liturgy of the Cosmic Christ

It is in the temple that Jesus is recognized as the Messiah by Simeon the priest when he circumcises him. At the age of twelve, Jesus amazes the temple teachers with his understanding (Luke 2). Much of Jesus' teaching and healing takes place in or around the temple, and when he dies on the cross, the veil of the temple is ripped in two (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

One of the most important moments is when Jesus cleanses the temple of the dictatorship of money and speaks of his body as the temple that will be raised up three days after it is destroyed. In St. John's gospel, the cleansing comes almost at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (John 2:13-22). His body supersedes the temple sacrifices: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me" (Heb 10:5, citing Ps 40:6).

As we've seen, the temple was a microcosm. Its sacrifices were for the renewal of the cosmos. So, the body of Christ was the new microcosm and sacrifice—which literally means "making holy." The cosmological passages in Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, probably hymns of the early Church, say exactly this: God planned "to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10). God reconciled all things to himself in heaven and on earth through Christ, "making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:19-20).

And Christ is "the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18): so as his Body *we* are the new microcosm and the sacrifice for the renewal of the cosmos. Our liturgy and church buildings must reflect that. Individually, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), sharing in Christ who is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24) because he gives the Holy Spirit to us. By baptism, we share in Christ's "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9): we are both rulers of creation, tending it with wisdom, and priests, mediating between heaven and earth. In the priesthood of Christ, we praise God through the creation by sacrificing—making holy—ourselves and the creation. That's why Patriarch Bartholomew, leader of a church that has held on to a cosmic understanding of liturgy, can speak of humankind as "microcosm and mediator"[6] and is a leading Christian ecologist.

The clear connection between Christian liturgy and the cosmos strongly supports the idea that the liturgy is a channel of *knowledge*. Jesus spoke about entering into knowledge by means of a key (see chap. 3): from the context this seems to mean the holy of holies of the temple (Luke 11:52). He gave Peter the key to the kingdom of the *heavens* (Matt 16:19). St. Gregory of Nyssa thought that the visionary of 2 Corinthians 12 had his heavenly ascent during an initiation in the *sanctuary* of Paradise.

All this might seem a long way from the Last Supper. But in fact the Last Supper is related to cosmic liturgy as love is related to knowledge. Remember from chapter 5 how demonstrating practical love of neighbor was an essential condition for baptism? Jesus prepared his disciples for his cosmic sacrifice by washing their feet—like a slave—and transforming the Passover meal into the sacrifice of his Body and Blood. Wisdom as knowledge given with love. When he died on the cross, the veil of the temple would be ripped, revealing the secrets of the holy of holies. So we begin

the Lord's Pasch with Maundy Thursday—the washing of the feet and the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Easter Vigil involves a new fire and new water—the cosmic liturgy of the creation of a new world.

How then, did the early Church celebrate the liturgy? We found in previous chapters that music was important. Through music, we express the voice of Christ healing the cosmos and (as a result), the cosmos praising God through "holy voices." We also saw that there were gesture and movement in the liturgy and that these were understood as choreography. But *because* the liturgy was so closely tied to cosmological knowledge, it's likely that church leaders were reserved about writing everything down in case the knowledge got stolen. They preferred to pass it down orally and by showing, rather than in writing, as St. Basil says: it was the Sign of the Cross and turning toward the East to pray that were passed down "in mystery"[7]—from the context, he means the liturgy. Early documents—which we'll consider in a moment—tell us a bit, but not much.

The Letter to the Hebrews tells us—translating literally—that "Christ has obtained a *liturgy* which is as much more excellent than the old (what Moses copied from what he saw on the mountain) as the covenant he mediates is better" (Heb 8:6).[8] The word "liturgy" is simply an anglicization of the Greek *leitourgia*, which means "public work" or "work of the people." Liturgy is, of course, first of all the *Opus Dei*, the "Work of God," as the Benedictines remind us, and it is Christ, God made human, who is the High Priest (Heb 8). Yet by baptism we are adopted as brothers and sisters of Christ: God became human so that we could become divine (Rom 8:12-17; 2 Pet 1:4).

What does Christ do in this liturgy "more excellent than the old"? He makes purification for sin and sits down at the hand of the majesty on high (Heb 1:3), which sounds like the Rite of Penance. He is "a great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (Heb 4:14). The veil of the temple had a panorama of the heavens on it, but Hebrews tells us that "the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities" (Heb 10:1, recalling that God commanded Moses to make the Ark after the pattern he saw on the mountain [Exod 25:40]).[9] This resembles Plato's theory of the Forms: that all particular things here, such as trees or horses or people or temples are imperfect copies of a perfect Form of Tree, Horse, Human Being, or Temple in the world of Forms.

Having passed through the veil, Christ our High Priest is exalted above the heavens (Heb 7:26) and is a minister in the true sanctuary in heaven (Heb 8:2). He enters the more perfect tabernacle not made by human hands, entering once and for all into the holy place (Heb 9:1-11). By his blood we now have the confidence to enter the sanctuary "by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, (that is, through his

flesh)" (Heb 10:20). So the curtain in the Christian sanctuary has a new meaning: it's not just the heavens, but the body of Christ who has ascended through the heavens and, as St. Paul understood, fills all things (Eph 4:10). Anointed in Christ, we have become like him, cosmic beings who by God's grace can live lives that embrace the whole of reality.

The book of Revelation, as we've already seen, is full of liturgy that intersperses the great angelic battle for the re-creation of the cosmos. John speaks of the temple in heaven being opened (11:19; 15:5). Was he talking only about the Jerusalem temple or about the Christian liturgy, which, like his vision, took place "on the Lord's day" (1:10)? Was all the singing and incense, the "prayers of the saints" (5:8; 8:3-4), only an image or a memory of the Jerusalem temple?

John lived in a much more practical culture than ours. People liked to be told about things they could see, hear, and touch, as is evidenced by Jesus' parables: stories of everyday life that revealed the hidden depths of reality. So why would John—and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews—describe a liturgy that bore no relation to what their audience would actually experience on the Lord's Day?

Early Christian church order and liturgy documents support our reading Hebrews and Revelation as describing actual Christian liturgy, a liturgy that reveals cosmological knowledge. The *Didache* (the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles") includes an offertory prayer thanking God for "life and *knowledge*" through Christ. And it was on the basis of the *Apostolic Tradition* that we could reconstruct the baptismal rite at Dura-Europos, with its powerful cosmology.

Then there's the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Didascalia* ("Catholic Teaching of the Twelve Apostles and Holy Disciples of Our Savior"). They're far from in agreement about every detail of the liturgy, but their titles are clearly based on the idea that the apostles left specific teaching, including about the basics of how the liturgy should be celebrated and that this knowledge should be handed down from one generation to the next. But the ultimate authority is claimed by the *Testamentum Domini* ("Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ"). Dating from the seventh century in its surviving form (though going back in part to the fourth), it has Jesus teaching the liturgy and the structure of the church to the apostles when he appears to them on Easter Sunday evening (John 20:19-23). The apparition story is based on a second-century apocryphon, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, and there is also an apocryphal apocalypse—again, liturgy and revelation. Many of the structures and ministries described—such as subdeacons—are later. But this does not stop the writer from ending the *Testamentum Domini* with Peter, James, and John sending the testament off to the churches via chosen witnesses.

At first sight, all this seems ridiculous, if not almost blasphemous. How could Christians dare to ascribe to the Lord himself customs that were later inventions and invent a whole story around it? But remember that Clement of Alexandria had said that "the knowledge and apprehension of things present, future, and past . . . which has descended by transmission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles" (and the *Testamentum Domini* contains an apocalypse about things present, future, and past). These few apostles were "James the righteous, John, and Peter . . . entrusted by the Lord *after his resurrection* with the knowledge. They imparted it to the other apostles, and the other apostles to the Seventy." So that is probably the basis of the story in the *Testamentum Domini*. Clement also gives a hint of a curtain or screen around the Christians' holy of holies when he complains about the heretics (probably Gnostics) who come in by the side door seeking *gnosis*. After all, in the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is described as passing through a veil to the holy of holies, and the same letter tells us that he obtained a much more excellent liturgy than the old (Heb 8:6).

But how could the author of documents that claimed authority from the apostles or even the Lord himself include customs that were local or late? Probably, "Whoever listens to you, listens to me" (Luke 10:16). Just as the apostles responded to the early Church's needs by creating the order of deacons, so later liturgists who were believed to have Wisdom (and may have had an ascent experience in the sanctuary) might develop the liturgy according to the needs of the community. It's a vision of a dynamic church, the "pilgrim church," as Vatican II puts it, which is journeying toward the final resurrection when the Lord comes again.[10] The liturgy is becoming *more* like the liturgy of heaven, more "on earth as it is in heaven." And the differences of the liturgy between different places are complementary, the working out of the particular genius God has placed in each people. Indeed, this is mirrored by the different experiences of the seven heavens had by different mystics: they were given different insights into the depths of reality according to their and their people's needs and capacities.

The possibility of development, of being led by Wisdom deeper into reality, meant that from the sixth century the curtain started being replaced by a fixed screen, the iconostasis (figure 1), between the sanctuary (the "Holy Place") and the nave, which continues to this day in Eastern churches. The tearing of the veil in two when Jesus died on the cross—which revealed what was in the holy of holies—is often understood as putting an end to the clergy hiding things from people. In that view, the iconostasis is at best the fruit of the Church Fathers' fascination with the Old Testament, and at worst the clergy hiding things from the people.

But if you go to an Eastern liturgy, you see that the screen is not about hiding: it's actually about *revelation.* There are two very dramatic moments: when the priest, representing Christ, goes behind the veil (the Great Entrance) and then when he reappears, showing the Holy Eucharist, bread and wine—our earth and lives—transformed into the body and blood of the risen Lord. In Western Christianity there was the "rood" or crucifix screen (figure 2), which offered a partial view, and like the iconostasis had central gates. It was a view into the hidden depths of reality.

Forgetting Knowledge, Forgetting Liturgy

And yet. For all the theology, for all the wonderful symbolism, many people feel baffled and excluded by a church arranged in a "traditional" manner. In one Christian healing center I know, a former convent, they have so many visitors who are recovering from wounds received in the context of "traditional" church that they've completely rearranged the chapel. Instead of the "hierarchical" sanctuary and nave, the chapel is arranged sideways, very informally, with the altar as the table of the Last Supper. This is the loving Lord Jesus who invites his friends to an intimate meal. Doesn't even the Letter to the Hebrews, with its high teaching on liturgy, spend its last chapter focusing on fraternal love and hospitality to strangers (Heb 13:1-3)?

The arrangement in the healing center is only a rather radical example of a general tendency in Western churches from the 1960s onward. The screen and the altar rails (figure 3) came to be seen as barriers that kept the laity out, leaving them ignorant and dependent on the clerical "professionals" who occupied the sanctuary. Of course, not everyone agrees. Some people—many of them laity—have felt wounded by the removal of the screen and/or altar rails.

I suggest that this crisis of *understanding* goes back to the fading of Christian cosmology in the late Middle Ages and the decisive moment of the Copernican revolution, when it was discovered that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the universe. When knowledge is lost, the result is a crisis of meaning. The arrangement of a church and the practical details of the liturgy are no longer understood—*wisdom has disappeared.* There is still a deep intuition that what we're doing in the liturgy is important, but *no one knows why.* So it becomes a matter of rules—*the law* replaces the Wisdom of God.

New meanings and "reasons" may be invented. For example, we saw in chapter 7 that the boy dancers of the Spanish cathedrals were dressed as angels, but from 1613 as soldiers. The *conquistadores* who built an empire

in Central and Southern America were the model, and their injustice laid the foundation for repressive governments that continue to this day. These same governments used Catholicism, and its liturgy, to control the indigenous peoples.

So the *Missa Campesina*, the liberation theology Mass with its folky songs I referred to earlier, is a revolt against this, a cry for an oppressed people to be set free. Its problem is that it tends to reduce liberation—and the struggle with the powers and principalities—to *only* material terms. The mystery of the deeper, cosmic battle between good and evil that is in each person has been lost. Such a liturgy will be no more use once greater social justice has been established. I say this because, although (arguably) in North America and Europe, our churches have become "nicer," I worry that there are young Christians who experience the care and love of their Christian family, school, or community and are glad to take part in youth and volunteering programs—but don't want to go to church. Church is boring. Praise and worship can and does bring some in, but not all—and there's the question of people keeping coming when they get past the age of 18, 21, 25 . . . Many "liturgies" that are created especially for distinct groups—be they women, youth, children, students, and so on—risk being merely a projection of an agenda or even just of the group's brokenness. The mystery has been lost.

In spite of the loss of cosmology, the Easter Vigil, with its new fire and the blessing of water, is strongly cosmological. And the pre–Vatican II Roman liturgy (the "Tridentine" Rite) retained many traces of cosmology. For example, in the priest's vesting prayers, when putting on the amice (a cloth that goes over the head and around the shoulders), he prayed that the Lord would place on his head the "helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17) to fight off diabolical attacks. This was taken from Paul's teaching that we are fighting with principalities and powers, the fallen angels (see chap. 8). When the priest went into the liturgy, representing Christ the High Priest, he was leading his people into the heavens, the depths of reality, which are a battleground. At the end of Mass the priest had to pray the *Benedicite*, the hymn of cosmic praise from Daniel (3:35-68).

There were other customs too: any water used for holy purposes (such as by the priest for washing his hands during Mass) could not be poured down the sewer: there were special sinks in the sanctuary of the church and in sacristies called *piscinae* (literally, "fish tanks") that drained directly into the earth. Similarly, cotton wool that had been used to contain holy oils or on which the bishop had wiped his hands after confirmations could not be thrown in the garbage but had to be burnt. This probably came from an ancient understanding that blessed water and oil would sanctify the earth

and air as part of Christ's redeeming of the whole creation. But this was not explained. It was just a rule.

And the attention to liturgical gesture was such that candidates for the priesthood, learning how to say Mass, would have string tied between their hands so that they held them the right distance apart! What seems utterly absurd makes sense if we understand the gestures and movements of the liturgy as choreography: the priests were learning the steps of the angels. Perhaps that went back to the fallen angels who had sinned by moving out of their proper orbit. The trouble was that it wasn't remembered like that. Rather, it was just one of a whole list of "delicts" (culpable mistakes) a priest could make while celebrating Mass: the law had replaced Wisdom.

This recalls all too clearly Jesus' words to the lawyers that they had taken away the key of knowledge and not entered themselves. No wonder many of these customs were experienced as pointless and guilt inducing and were discarded with relief after Vatican II. In any case, liturgical scholars had long been concerned by a complete disconnect between the liturgy—supposedly the "work of the *people*"—and popular devotion. Some of these devotions were, in any case, doctrinally dubious—getting the saints to protect us from a terrible God was a favorite theme—and sentimental. Surely they represented little more than a sop on the part of an authoritarian clergy to keep the poor, suffering people quiet? Liturgical reform stressed the active participation of the people in the liturgy—understanding what was going on and taking their rightful place in reading and in other ministries.

But many people, lay as well as clergy, perceived in the older forms of the liturgy something deeper, something beyond the human errors of legalism, authoritarianism, and general forgetfulness. They saw a mystery beyond words (like Paul's visionary in the third heaven). The loss of many of the practices that were part of the Mass reduced some people's access to the mystery.

Yet if we're struggling to understand the basis for aspects of liturgy such as vestments and gesture, that makes it very difficult to overcome the real divisions caused by different liturgical "tastes"—or, perhaps we should say, different experiences of liturgy. Depending on whom we talk to, liturgy can be everything from the pre–Vatican II "Tridentine" Mass to a one-off service put together for a youth event.

I suggest that Wisdom—and her knowledge of the cosmos—might give us a deeper understanding of the liturgy. Of course, because liturgy ultimately comes from heaven, it's beyond earthly words. But words might at least give us an entry into this heavenly liturgy, an entry which at the moment we struggle to find because we've lost the key of knowledge. In the rest of this chapter I want to explore how the liturgies we have—primarily

the Eucharist but also the other sacraments and liturgies—might be celebrated in the light of the lost Knowledge of Christ. I take as my basis the liturgy with which I'm most familiar, the modern Roman Rite.

Celebrating the Mysteries

So what might the Sunday Eucharist look like if celebrated with Wisdom's Knowledge? Given that the liturgy takes place in the heavens and the heavens are a battleground, then, first of all, all the ministers of the liturgy—clergy, readers, musicians, etc.—need to include prayer in their preparation/rehearsal (including the selection of music), whatever is the most appropriate form for the prayer to take. If the choir includes musicians who do not have explicit Christian faith, the prayer can very well take the form of silent meditation that engages with the building.

If the liturgy begins with a procession, this will be understood as a choreography of the whole people of God. It may begin outside the church: it still does at the Easter Vigil when, like Israel leaving Egypt, we leave a fallen world to enter a building that symbolizes the new heaven and new earth. So it might be appropriate to begin at least on the porch.[11] Each stage further into the church is then a journey further into the heavens, further into reality.

In the Roman Rite, the procession was traditionally led by the thurifer (incense bearer) followed by a crossbearer, then servers holding candles, the ordained ministers, the choir, and then all the rest of the people. In the light of Christian cosmology, we see that the incense is Wisdom, the Spirit (Sir 24:15), guiding the choreography. The cross is Christ crucified, cleansing the heavens by the power of his cross and leading us in the dance of his resurrection as all look up to the cross for healing (cf. Num 21:9; John 3:14). The candles are the angels who are the great lights, the sun and moon; the ordained ministers and choir similarly share in the angelic ministries. And as we move into the church and around it, we look up and see this cosmic temple, the roof which is the heavens, the floor which is the earth, and the pillars which join them. The structure seems to move as we move: the cosmos is dancing with us. Moved by the Spirit and following Christ, we are on the journey of return to the Father, our true origin.

And we do this as "microcosm and mediator" on behalf of the whole cosmos. Though all should be encouraged to join in the procession, not all may feel ready. No one should be bullied: for some people, particularly those who feel on the margins of the Church, just "being" in church may be the only "headspace" they have. Just as there are different heavens to

journey through and integrate, we come together as a community with different levels of belonging in the church. The church building should therefore be where everyone can find his or her place.

The procession may arrive in the sanctuary—or not just yet. In one church I know, the Rite of Penance and Liturgy of the Word take place at the back of the church: then everyone processes up at the offertory for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. With all this bodily movement, this Mass was popular with teenagers.

Beginning the liturgy in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are given a structuring word, a logos, for the procession we've just experienced with our bodies. The Rite of Penance deepens the *metanoia*, the repentance. We've already begun moving into the heavens by the power of Christ's cross. Liberated from an unhealthy introspection and from all craven fear of an angry and vengeful God, we recall not only our own failings but also our and the whole creation's hurts that need healing and the unjust structures built with knowledge but without wisdom. In asking for mercy, we are praying that God heal what is broken and set free and raise up the cosmos of which we are part. And so we sing his glory.

When we hear God's holy Word—read and sung by holy voices that have been blessed and broken open for us in the preaching—we receive vibration in our bodies, story in our ears, and symbolic meaning in our minds. And we hear silence—an essential part of music. All these elements and levels need to be present. So Scripture is not moral *or* symbolic *or* mystical; it's not spiritual *or* earthly, about this world *or* the next: it's all of these. Love, knowledge, and wisdom are inseparable, just like the different heavens that must be integrated in us.

When the community proclaims its faith in the Creed, we commit ourselves to the journey of *metanoia* that is faith, set free from the need for a pseudoscientific certainty—for our faith is in things unseen, on which the art of liturgy opens a window. Set free of the prison of self-centeredness, our intercession will embrace the needs of the whole creation.

The cosmic significance of the offertory procession is now very clear: humankind brings bread and wine, fruits of the earth and work of human hands, to be transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This is our share in the priesthood of him who has descended and ascended, that he might fill all things (Eph 4:10).

At the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy), we're taken up into the vision that Isaiah had in the temple (Isa 6) and John's vision on the Lord's Day. We're united with the heavenly Church, those who have already passed through the veil at death, including those who are still to complete their journey through the heavens. We are in the one sacrifice, the one *making holy,* of Christ. He

will renew the cosmos through us: as we become the Body of Christ we are to eat, we transform the world into which we are sent out (though how and when the fruits will be seen we do not know). So we make Eucharist, that is, we give thanks, for "life and knowledge."

Holy Communion will tend to raise the question of the arrangement of the church. In view of our recovered cosmological knowledge, should all God's people—all sharing by baptism in his priesthood—receive the Eucharist around the altar? Should we not all pass "through the veil"? Or—thinking of places where everyone has been invited to stand around the altar during the eucharistic prayer—doesn't this give the impression that the new heaven and new earth have already arrived, that there is nothing left to repent for and long for, to gaze after and desire?

I don't know. Given the heartache and alienation often caused by more extreme "reorderings" of churches—often involving the destruction of high altars, rails, and screens built from the donations of the poor—caution born of charity is surely needed. There is no "law" to be automatically applied, rather a judgment of wisdom. Whether churches still have screens and rails or not, it may be a matter of seeing what we have in the light of Wisdom's Knowledge, and then acting together on the vision. One possibility is a church in Texas where everyone passes through the screen (the "veil"), past the choir stalls (the singing angels), and kneels before the altar together, as one people, to receive Holy Communion. It would be good to start a conversation on this.

Such everyday things as notices and so on are essential to the life of the community and prepare us gently to come down the mountain: we're not yet ready to spend all our lives in the heavens. When we're sent forth to transform the world, we go not to be as busy as possible but to share first in the Sabbath relaxation of coffee and doughnuts or tea and biscuits. The renewal and mending of bonds is realized at this time, as we dare to reach out to and be reached by people perhaps we do not know. This is in fact an essential counterbalance to a real risk of "high" liturgy: the Gnostics may well have been people who glimpsed a genuinely more real world when the veil parted—and so sought an escape rather than integration of heaven and earth. Their rituals of ascent[12] had no protection and no precondition of love and so were too easily the path to alienation and insanity. This is echoed today in churches so wrapped up in the quest for "perfect" liturgy that they've become cold and unfriendly. So the *agape* (love feast) of coffee and doughnuts after Mass—not to mention the Church's charity projects—are essential to the liturgy.

What about the other mysteries?

Through *baptism* Christ saves us. He raises us from the unconscious, in which we don't even know that we are held by the sin of the world.

We are raised to new life and awareness in a bath of enlightenment, made priest, prophet, and king over creation. We are started on the journey into the heavens. Initially, we're either baffled (remember, liturgy is weird), or we're too young to know. But the light is within us.

In *confirmation* we are anointed to become Christ-ians: as Christ's adopted brothers and sisters, we receive the spirit of Wisdom to share, by grace, God's knowledge of his creation. We "all [. . .] have knowledge/know all things" (1 John 2:20). In the East, confirmation is administered to babies immediately after baptism; in the West, children normally wait until puberty or maybe earlier. In many places, sadly, confirmation has become the "Rite of Exit": this is the last time teenagers will go to church until they're married. I wonder if at that moment in their lives when they no longer talk like a child but are ready to put an end to childish ways (1 Cor 13:11), when they're struggling to cope with the changes in their own bodies and the old explanations for the world no longer work, if, at that moment, we taught Christian cosmology? Wouldn't it be a gateway to an adult spirituality, an adult understanding of the cosmos, so that they and we might "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:13)?

The sacrament of *reconciliation* is starting to become more popular again after a long period of decline: this recovery is due partly to the rise in therapy (see chap. 4). The difficulty with reconciliation in the Catholic Church is that the sacrament is required only in the case of grave sin: so often, because people don't *require* it, they conclude that they don't *need* it. In the light of cosmology we see that all sin comes from the influence of the fallen angels and the breaking of the world's bonds. This has wounded us. Our sins are thus less serious than we may imagine—but also *more* serious than we imagine in their effects, because they contribute to the breaking of bonds. In practice, I have found that the practice of sacramental confession, while no substitute for therapy, shares some of the practical benefits: saying something out loud, being heard, gaining self-knowledge. And—beyond therapy—we *hear* that we're forgiven by God. It is an abuse of the sacrament for the priest to administer penance as if it were a punishment, like a parking ticket: rather it should be for the healing of what is broken. So if someone has stolen money, he or she should restore it in amount or in kind; if the person's sins are, as is more common, the usual small but addictive behavior kind, the penance should look toward the healing of the wound that triggers the sin.

The a*nointing of the sick* has begun to flourish since Vatican II. It had become a sacrament of the dying, simply because before the wonderful advances of modern medicine, most serious illnesses were fatal, and in any case, medical care was unaffordable. James says, "Are any among you *sick*?"

(Jas 5:14-15). His following words that the prayer of faith with the anointing of oil will "save/heal the sick person, and if he or she has committed any sins, they will be forgiven" are harder to hear. There was a case of some Christians who were rightly banned from volunteering in a hospital because they told the patients they were ill on account of their sins. Certainly our sins can make us ill: if I abuse alcohol I could well end up with liver disease. But behind James's teaching is the cosmic understanding of sin: sin is something we have fallen into, the sin of the world which harms us. In practice, the sacrament of anointing, where it does not also lead to physical healing, often brings people peace, acceptance, and healing of painful memories.

The sacraments traditionally understood as *ordering* the Church, m*arriage* and *holy orders* (ordination to ministry), are concerned a great deal with reconnecting heaven and earth, so that it should be "on earth as it is in heaven." After the Fall, and the expulsion of humankind from Eden, God told the Woman, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16). *This is the perfect analysis of an abusive relationship.* The vision Christ offers—for all the massive challenges and constant mutual forgiveness needed to journey into it—is his everlasting love for his bride, the Church (Eph 5:21-33). In the pre–Vatican II liturgy, when women were forbidden to enter the sanctuary, the exception was made at the nuptial Mass, when husband and wife entered the sanctuary together to receive Holy Communion. They had reentered Eden, there to be fruitful in whatever way God called them to and to tend the creation together.

In our time, the divorce rate is very high. Christian cosmology suggests that marriages in which the potential spouse's shadow side goes unrecognized can easily disintegrate. These marriages may never have been marriages in Christ but rather ones entered into under the influence of the fallen angels/stars (chap. 8). What is broken may be healable too: we pray that Christ will redeem all things. Sometimes there may be a new start, a true marriage "made in heaven."

Holy orders, in the light of Christ's knowledge, is about providing "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1). Through their faithful service to the mysteries, they are to provide good order (*kosmos*) to the community of Christ in creation, leading the people of God in their royal priesthood. They are to "teach everyone in all wisdom" (Col 1:28)—always remembering that the wisdom from above is peaceable, gentle, and open to reason (Jas 3:17). There has been a lot of tension in Christian understanding about the *identity* or *image* of the priest: the cultic priest *versus* the pastor, the man of God *versus* the man of the people. This tension does not need to exist if the hierarchy is one of service and justice, which includes the handing down of knowledge, according to people's capacity.

The Liturgy of the Hours, services at set times of the day to praise God with psalms and readings—especially morning and evening—is a very ancient tradition. Evening Prayer, often called Vespers or Evensong, goes back to the evening sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple. The *Apostolic Tradition* encourages Christians to pray at set hours, including during the night (remembering that the whole creation stops at midnight to praise God), a practice that monastic communities continue to this day. We have seen how this was cosmic praise, and an early Christian apocryphon called the *Testament of Adam*—probably based, like the *Ascension of Isaiah*, on an earlier Jewish text—has Adam teach his son Seth about the praise of the different hours. So at the third hour of the night the fish, the fire, and the lower depths praise God; at the fourth hour it is the turn of the seraphim, singing the Holy, Holy (cf. Isa 6); at the twelfth hour (5:00 a.m., when the day begins) the fire and winds are silent as the priest burns the incense, and the heavenly powers are dismissed. The "heavenly ones" make petition at the first hour of day, while at the tenth, the Spirit of God descends on the waters to stop them harming us, and God anoints and heals the afflicted.[13] It's a vision of a praying community.

Also, in the light of Christian cosmology, we can also see that the different cycles of the liturgy—the Sundays and feasts, the seasons, the cycle of psalms and the saints' days—recall the dance of the angels/stars in their different orbits.

I've found that in practice, those laypeople who choose to pray with the Liturgy of the Hours, either in public with a Christian community or on their own, tend to manifest the Spirit's gift of knowledge. To many Christians, the Liturgy of the Hours or "Office" is somewhat arcane and remote (not aided by the fact that many liturgy books require endless flicking from one page to another). Perhaps that will change as we recover the Knowledge of Christ. *But we must not* think that liturgy is the "gold standard" and that those who find God in devotional prayer, like the rosary, eucharistic adoration, or praise and worship, are somehow spiritually inferior. A religion of the head, forgetting the heart, is just Gnosticism: it's forgotten the incarnation and the love by which Wisdom imparts knowledge. Devotions, appealing to lower chakras in the body (see chap. 5), are related to liturgy as the lower heavens are related to the higher. So the Marian devotion of the rosary is really a devotion to Holy Wisdom; eucharistic adoration recalls the Bread of the Presence (and makes Vespers a big success if it is combined with it). Praise and worship shares in the praise of the angels, and prayer with icons is a meditation on our call to divinization.

Devotion falls into unhealthy emotionalism and neurosis when it is cut off from or in conflict with the liturgy (which *is* the heavenly journey).

It's a refusal of change and process and of openness to healing: however understandable this may be, it's a refusal of true repentance, *metanoia*. A healthy church will be one that can celebrate diversity in prayer—realizing that integrating the heavens means that at different times we will need prayer "belonging" to different heavens.

There is, of course, no "magic solution" for liturgy. Because we live in a fallen world, it will always be a challenge to get up for church. And liturgy will always be weird. Liturgy is multimedia art, and something in art always escapes analysis. That "something" is what questions us, like the twists in Jesus' parables, ultimately revealing to us the depths of reality. It is revealing, truly apocalyptic. Indeed, many people say we're living in an apocalyptic age—though we seldom pause to ask what this really means.

Chapter 10
The Age of Revelation

For images, go to:
http://lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com/chapter-10-the-age-of-revelation

Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops," said Jesus (Luke 12:2-3). It seems that prophecy is being fulfilled in our time. Things that previous generations considered not to be spoken about, such as mental illness, child abuse, domestic violence, and homosexuality are openly discussed. Things never much discussed—such as the position of women (especially in the Church), ecology, and the morality of war—are all key debates. And in all these areas great social changes are happening in Western society.

In chapter 1 we thought about the "lost document" thriller, for which today's readers, in the search for lost knowledge, seem to have an inexhaustible appetite. We saw that it corresponds to the Quest, one of the seven basic plots. But now one of the most common plots is a new one: the novel of revelation. It begins with the characters living outwardly normal and happy lives, only to have all this shattered—but seldom redeemed—by the revelation of a long-buried secret. Try Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* or Nicole Krauss's *Great House*.

This type of revelation is also found in other art forms, especially film, with uncensored swearing, violence, nudity, and sex. Reality TV is highly popular, and many people live their private lives very publicly on social media such as Facebook. The media exposes the private lives of celebrities

and public figures in general, either—depending on your point of view—to meet the public's right to know or as an intrusive and relentless real-life soap opera. Even such social mores as clothing less of the body than previous generations and the increasing use of first names between people who don't know each other well—often right from the moment of introduction—show a shift of the private sphere into the public. An age of revelation.

And it's not a simple case of the Church versus a fallen world. These questions can divide Christians just as much. The authority of Church leaders is no longer automatically accepted, which reflects a general tendency in Western society. Egalitarianism began in the eighteenth century with the American Constitution and the French Revolution but has gathered pace since the 1960s. Does this mean that the radical Christian teaching that all people are equal before God—that in Christ there is neither Gentile nor Jew, slave nor free person (Gal 3:28)—is being accepted? Or is it a rebellion against God-given authority, just as Satan and his angels rebelled?

We can quickly see that there are no simple yes/no answers. Rebellion out of a spirit of selfish individualism against the leaders of the Church who held clear authority from New Testament times (John 20:23; Heb 13:7) can never be right. But absolute human authority does not belong to Christianity—Paul withstood Peter "because he stood condemned" (Gal 2:11). Society's unquestioning obedience to those in authority enabled the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of children to be hidden, including in the Church. Now, it's unraveling for the first time in world history. Many women have put up with their husbands' abuse and infidelities "for the children's sake" or in the name of their marriage vows, "for better and for worse." Now, zero tolerance of domestic abuse is insisting that men really commit to loving their wives as Christ loves the Church (Eph 5:25). But with a high divorce rate—or a consequent unwillingness to marry at all—we may ask whether people's expectations are not too high. Maybe we need to learn again to ask forgiveness and to give it?

In the case of mental illness, this was often a painful secret that many families kept because of the stigma involved and the cruel treatment of many psychiatric patients in institutions. Today there is much more understanding and treatment for the mentally ill and support for their families and friends. People openly talk about having therapy. But as Christians (and as Jung saw, see chap. 8) we may feel that therapy is sometimes an inadequate substitute for religion and that people have unrealistic expectations of it.

Regarding realism in the arts, especially film, should we allow it, as there's evidence that young people especially copy what they see on TV? Or do we need to be shocked into reality and stop pretending (Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, for example—or the exposure and downfall of domestic and social tyranny in *Pleasantville* or *Chocolat*)?

And so on—and we haven't even got on to ecology. Some people think global warming is truly a sign we're in the end times: in the fourth plague of Revelation, the sun scorches humankind (Rev 16:8-9). But "revelation" comes from the Latin translation of the Greek *apokalypsis*, which means not disaster—but unveiling. The unveiling of what has been hidden.

In recovering the Christian tradition of Wisdom and her knowledge, the lost Knowledge of Christ, we've discovered that it's not so much facts—still less instant answers—but a *way of knowing.* Wisdom involves *presence* to one's own body, to nature, to others, to the whole cosmos, that adds up to a *transforming movement* or journey which we call *metanoia:* repentance. This *way of knowing* will give us a *way of answering*.

To move us toward answers for our age—and the conflicts that have torn our churches apart—I want to take us back first to the world of the 1960s. This, we discovered in chapter 2, was the period when the parent of contemporary nonreligious spiritualities, the New Age movement, was born. It was essentially a return of Gnosticism, a distortion of authentic Christian *gnosis* or knowledge. And it was the period of social revolution that ushered in our egalitarian world with all its blessings and troubles.

An Apocalyptic Moment?

We saw in chapter 2 how the sixties youth culture and the peace movement grew out of the civil rights movement. What started as action for racial equality soon developed into the feminist movement. The recovery of Mother Earth by feminists helped awaken us to the environmental crisis and paved the way for ecology (even if the Woodstock festival of 1969 left devastation in its wake). And with the revolt against "repression," the sixties put the question of mental health and well-being in the limelight. Psychology and therapy were in (so was experimenting with drugs, which caused a lot of mental illness). Freedom was expressed in bodily freedom—dance, more relaxed and fewer clothes, and sexual experiment (although this was also a perfect cover for many child abusers). The young people who became the New Agers spoke much of consciousness and awareness, which made Gnosticism a natural spiritual resource for them. Though the New Age is a bit old age now, it gave birth to today's nonreligious spiritualities. As in other periods of change and upheaval, such as the Renaissance and Reformation, Gnosticism is attractive because it's *strongly cosmological.* It tries to understand the world *when we see the world is changing* because what was hidden has come to light: the older certainties are certain no more.[1]

Youth culture believed in the possibility of heaven on earth and was therefore optimistic about the future: The chorus of *Slade*'s hit *Merry Xmas Everybody* (1973) contains the lines, "Look to the future now, / It's only just begun." This was in fact only a reinvention of the previous generations' belief that the future is predictable. Until about 1980 many people in the West held, however unconsciously, to the belief that society has a *story*—a past, a present, and a future. This is a core belief of what historians call the *modern* period, which began around the Renaissance and Reformation. In spite of wars, recessions, and other upheavals, people basically believed that if they worked hard and saved, trying to "improve" themselves by study and other means along the way, the future would be better. If we joined a company and worked our way up, we stood a good chance of a job for life. Indeed, the strong interest in Marxism during the 1970s—in universities and even the churches—was due not just to the presence of a radically different system of government behind the Iron Curtain that was making its presence felt globally. It was also because Marxism believes in progress toward a better *future*. All this is a secular version of the Christian belief in the Christ coming again to bring a "new heaven and a new earth."

But then the Iron Curtain came down, and by the early 1990s it was clear that Marxist communism had failed. And at the same time, "get rich quick" had suddenly become possible for a significant number of people. Perhaps this was the moment when the myth of the future died. Ironically, the massive emphasis of youth culture on individual freedom had already chipped away at most of the structures (repressive or otherwise) that made a predictable future possible. This explains why contemporary spiritualities are much less of a mass movement, and much weaker on community, than their New Age parent.

Now, in a "postmodern" world, there are so many possibilities and choices, especially with the invention of the Internet, only one of many vast scientific advances. We can make up our lives as we go; *we make up our own story.* A bit, we might say, like artists. Artists tend to be especially suspicious of any structure they feel could take away their liberty. Perhaps this explains the huge rise in interest in contemporary art, often as a source of spirituality. At root, I think we are looking for a spirituality that has advanced as much as science.

This greater freedom should in theory—and really does in practice—give people freedom to discover their true calling from God. But if we don't believe in a future, it's very hard to commit to anything. Far fewer people save money. Boom-bust economics has made that difficult, being based on short-term gain rather than long-term planning (hence overlong working hours—make us much as we can now, because we might not have a job tomorrow).

And without structures—be they family or church or community—to support us, it's difficult to sustain a relationship. Even many devout Christians find it almost impossible to "save themselves" for marriage: I think this is due not just to shifts in sexual morality or the bombardment of sexual imagery in advertising and the media (sex has always been in the background in culture because it's just so much a part of us)—it's also due to this anxiety about having no future. No wonder Lenten fasting has been similarly eroded, though people make very generous *one-off* charitable donations.

The backdrop to all this is the environmental crisis. While it has helped us reconnect with nature, it is marked most of all by climate *instability.* The more instability there is around us, the harder it is to make plans. For some indigenous peoples in the Amazon, this has made life almost impossible as the dry and rainy seasons, and harvesting and planting, become totally unpredictable.

We called—and still call—our society *post*modern. This says a lot. We are *after* the modern era. We're parasitic, in a sense, on a period we have rejected, because we haven't found a new structure to replace it. For all the real goodness and joy and creativity we experience, we have nothing in the future to hope for, and therefore no stable present. My confrere Timothy Radcliffe often says that Christians shouldn't talk to people first about love, but about hope, because they haven't got any.

What might Christian knowledge say to this? What is our revelation for an age of upheaval and the exposure of scandals and inadequacies, an apocalyptic age? What can we say to the rising consciousness that is part of an age of revelation? The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and Hope"), itself a product of the sixties, recognized that humankind was living in a new age, and that the Church does not always have a ready answer to every (new) question.[2]

The Lost Knowledge of Christ for Today

So now let's summarize the previous chapters' findings on the lost Knowledge of Christ, in dialogue with the questions raised by contemporary nonreligious spiritualities. In chapter 2 we made two lists from contemporary nonreligious spiritualities: one of common words and one of oppositions with religion.

In the first list were words such as angels, astrology, awareness, Celtic spirituality, chakras, change, Cosmic Christ, earth, Eastern, interconnectedness, out-of-body experience, vibration, vision. Now that we have explored the Knowledge of Christ, perhaps all these things seem less weird than

before? Angels turned out to be much more important in Christianity than we thought—but we distinguish between good and bad ones. Astrology is actually about the influence of angels, not predicting the future. True knowledge is not just facts, it's an awareness of the cosmos and a resultant self-awareness. Celtic spirituality is put back in its proper context of Christian cosmology. Chakras are seen to be microcosmic parallels with the seven heavens. Change is part of repentance, a therapeutic process, and Christ is indeed cosmic. The earth has a very important place, and Eastern Christianity is a major source for cosmology—and therefore a resource for dialogue with religions from farther East. Everything is interconnected, because we are part of creation as well as its priests, as the mystics who had out-of-body experiences saw. Music is about the vibration of the voice of Christ healing the universe; and his Wisdom both comes from vision and gives vision.

As for the second list, the divine and God are not opposed; nor are cosmos and creation. Nor are body and soul, nor equality and hierarchy, because authority comes from Wisdom. This is *not* to say that contemporary spiritualities and Christianity are really just saying the same thing. While we have much common ground, our differences are actually to do with concerns over the *consequences* of certain beliefs. With that in mind, let's see what light Christian cosmology shines on the areas of disagreement. In the final section of this chapter, we'll try to see why the Knowledge of Christ has similarities with the cosmological teachings of ancient religions and philosophers, and its great secret for the digital age, the age of the screen.

Sources of the Lost Knowledge

The lost Knowledge of Christ, the teachings of Christian cosmology, is found in five sources: Scripture, especially in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament; Christian apocrypha; the Church Fathers; the liturgy; and the Christian arts—and all of these are the fruit of prayer. Apocrypha are acceptable insofar as they're compatible with the teachings of Scripture and deepen our understanding of those teachings.

Knowledge *(gnosis)* is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It's a share in God's knowledge of his creation, so that we begin to know the creation—which includes ourselves—as the Creator knows his creation. But the fallen angels stole knowledge and taught it *without wisdom* to humankind, teaching them the distorted knowledge of warfare and witchcraft. For this reason the early Church was wisely reserved about teaching it: the Church taught it as wisdom, *knowledge given with love*.

The teachings of knowledge were passed down orally through a chain of witnesses, starting, it seems, with Peter, James, and John, Jesus' closest

friends, receiving them directly from him. These teachings were probably "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt 13:11).[3] Deeply bound up with the liturgy, they were taught to new Christians only after initiation. The Christian liturgy, especially in its cosmic dimension, recovered and fulfilled the ancient understanding of the Jewish temple liturgy. The teachings show some parallels with the teachings of Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Plato, and they may have a common ancestor in Jewish temple mysticism.

The Knowledge of Christ was distorted by the Gnostics, many of them ex-Christians. While, in their leaving the Church, there were probably faults on both sides, by doing so they took the teachings out of their proper context. Nevertheless, by recovering the true *gnosis* we can "undistort" the Gnostic teachings and be in a better position to dialogue with today's nonreligious spiritualities, as they are descended from Gnosticism.

The Cosmic Cross

In an age that struggles with the meaning of sin, repentance, and the cross, the teaching of the *Cosmic Cross* (figure 1) sets us free from the terrible burden of introverted guilt caused by forgetting the cosmic dimension of sin. The Cosmic Cross understands repentance, *meta-noia*, according to its literal meanings of change of direction, change of heart, and *knowing with* God's knowledge of his creation ("con-sciousness" and "con-science"). As Enoch was given to see, sin originated with the fallen angels/stars who went out of orbit and put the whole creation out of balance. This is the "sin of the world" or "cosmic sin." Sin is therefore primarily something we fall into rather than something we do. We suffer and sin through the fallen angels' influence, their stolen and distorted knowledge, unwisely given: we suffer and share in the breaking of the bonds of creation and the exceeding of its limits. So the earth as well as humankind suffers because of our often ignorant choices (Isa 24:4-6). This breaking of bonds is the "falling short" that is sin (Rom 3:23).

The At-one-ment of Christ's cross bound creation's broken bonds back together again: this is the real meaning of re-ligion, from the Latin *re-ligio*, "binding back together." The cross is the tree of life that overcomes the effects of the tree of knowledge.

The Cosmic Cross exposes the terrible reality of sin: the consequences of even minor decisions, such as not recycling this bit of paper, are much greater than we imagine. It also shows that our sins come from our wounds, which diminishes our personal responsibility. Not all want to know, which is why they persecute those who speak the truth (such as the persecution of the opponents of Nazism).

The Cosmic Cross is a way to healing of ourselves and the whole creation through the path of good grieving in Christ: as "the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph 3:18-19): upward into the heavens, a deeper perception of reality; downward into the body and the earth; side to side in a deeper understanding of neighbor and the whole of creation; and behind, healing of past memories, and forward, healing of fear for the future. This is often experienced as an inner resurrection: a deeper personal healing, with an expansion of our consciousness, so that we are in universal solidarity with the sufferings and needs of humanity and the whole creation.

The Heavens

The seven (or more) heavens (figure 2) follow on from the Cosmic Cross. They are not to be understood as physical but as a "layered" understanding of the cosmos and of ourselves that takes into account invisible as well as visible layers of reality. Although their background understanding is the earth-centered universe of Ptolemy, the heavens represent our "view from here" and therefore the journey God calls us to make into reality from our perspective to his. The seven heavens tradition lasted until the medieval poet Dante.

Through early Christian initiation and liturgical art we can see that the seven heavens is a resurrection and ascension journey of *metanoia*, a journey into sharing God's knowledge of the cosmos, a journey of enlightenment into consciousness. Magicians were not accepted for initiation, and all candidates had to show evidence of real practical love of neighbor (part of the mystery of the Cosmic Cross) as a condition of baptism: because knowledge could be given only with love. In my experience, what non-Christians most admire about churches is our capacity to build community from people of diverse social backgrounds.

Through mystagogy the new Christians would learn that the ascent through the heavens is not as an escape but a personal, social, and cosmic integration, with each heaven corresponding to a different gift of the Holy Spirit. Comparing the necessarily personal experiences of the mystics who had ascended in the Spirit through the heavens, we see connections—such as the third heaven as the place of unsayable words, paradise, the liturgy, and the mills of manna (the Eucharist?).

We can also make connections between the heavens and the Indian tradition of the chakras, which is most commonly understood as a system of seven energy centers from the base of the spine to the head. While with "fallen knowledge" we can abuse the chakras, their use with Wisdom can be a real healing method and makes sense of such mind-body experiences as "gut feelings."

The heavenly journey may also be the origin of purgatory. Those deeper levels of reality we don't reach on our Christian pilgrimage before our death, by the mercy of God we complete in the next. It also means that our dead have gone deeper into the depths of the present, the depths of now. They are not being punished, but journeying into the light.

The result is becoming as Christ the Cosmic Man (figures 2, 3), who has fully integrated all the heavens and overcome them. He radiates healing, and by his grace so do we as Christ-ians or "anointed ones" who "all have knowledge/know all things" by the grace of confirmation (1 John 2:20). While, as the fulfilment of the "binding back together" of the Cosmic Cross, this offers the vision of re-creation—a healed ecosystem, a just society, and a flourishing economy—it does not guarantee immediate heaven on earth. Rather, it's victory in a cosmic battle that will take longer than one life, as the whole creation groans in labor and we await the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:21-23). We can understand this by looking at Mary, the Cosmic Woman (figure 4). She is filled with the Holy Spirit (feminine in Hebrew), source of Wisdom. Wisdom (figure 5) includes cosmological knowledge (Sir 1; 24), which Mary embodies. So she is the cosmic woman clothed with the sun, crowned with twelve stars. She represents the whole Church, victorious even in suffering.

The Law of Music

Wisdom played and danced before the Lord, as a little child, a master craftsperson, and a *harmonizer.* She is therefore the heavenly choir mistress and establishes the *Law of Music*. She fulfills the traditional understanding that music is the structure of the cosmos, the Logos holding the universe together, and has healing power of cosmic proportions.

This understanding brings together spirituality and science. Music is most basically sound: we feel higher pitches higher in the body, and lower pitches lower down. It thus connects with the chakra system and the microcosm of the seven heavens in our bodies. We sing with *breath (spiritus)*: Spirit-led music will conform us to the new heaven and new earth, because the dead who hear the voice of the Son of God will live (John 5:25). David healed Saul's depression through divinely inspired music, and the healing of atonement was in the Levites' *song*. Hence the chanting of the Scriptures and the blessing for those who are to read the Word of God. In the Middle Ages singing was understood as a quasi-priestly role, and today in the charismatic tradition the music ministry prays for anointing. The early Church sang with "holy voices."

The music of the Logos is marked by grounding in the Word of God, the measure (or limit) of the Logos, and movement to follow Christ in

cosmic liturgy. This understanding is found in the transmission of Christian knowledge in the *Odes of Solomon* and other hymns, in Christian folksongs from the Celtic Outer Hebridean islands, and in the writings, mandala-like paintings (figure 6), and music of St. Hildegard of Bingen. Many of her songs are to Wisdom, Mary, and the fire of the Spirit.

Wisdom as the Law of Music is one of singing as showing forth rather than showing off, and the organ in particular as tapping the different resonances of creation for cosmic praise. As the "law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2), Wisdom's law of music overcomes the human tendency to legalism and suggests metanoia/repentance as a gradual process, a *movement* of discord into harmony.

Dancing with Angels

Angels dance (figure 7) because they "are" the stars in their cosmic orbits. Ezekiel saw the circular movement of the angelic wheels of God's chariot, and Wisdom danced before God as he created the world with her (Prov 8:31). As choir mistress–choreographer she also harmonizes the *choros* that was traditionally a dancing choir. Enoch saw angels circling the House of God while the fallen angels had moved out of orbit: they had gone against the divine choreography. Plato's cosmology includes the movement of the stars or "Music of the Spheres" (*musica mundana*), and the Jewish monastic community of the *Therapeutes* included dance steps in worship that recall Platonic movement. In the Jerusalem temple, the priests moved around the altar at the feast of Tabernacles, and holy men danced this in the outer courts. David danced before the Ark, while God is himself a dancer in one translation of Zephaniah 3:17.

In the New Testament, worship is bodily—lifting holy hands (1 Tim 2:8), and every knee will bend at Jesus' name (Phil 2:10). Until the Middle Ages, the early Church had a choreographic understanding of liturgy, and in apocryphal tradition the Virgin Mary danced when she was presented as a child in the temple. The risen Christ was understood as restoring humanity to the cosmic dance of the angels from which we had fallen (figure 8). Dancing with angels brought a share in God's knowledge. And in relation to the church building, the movement of the liturgy was experienced as the building itself moving as a symbol of the cosmos dancing. All this speaks to the interests and insights of much contemporary choreography.

The Angelic Dance tradition was the source of the medieval cathedral dance, which might take place on a labyrinth (figure 9), being "on earth as it is in heaven." Dance inspired by David dancing before the tabernacle is found in the Ethiopian liturgy to this day, and the Spanish cathedral dances of *Los Seises* that recall David's dance and the Mary-Wisdom connection

survive—without, unfortunately, the original angelic understanding, which was lost and debased by the sixteenth century.

The Gnostic tradition of Christ's dance is one that seeks to escape the bodiliness of the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ, though it points to an early Christian understanding of dance as a way of knowing. The Gnostic flight from reality, however, suggests that the movement of the fallen angels, rather than Wisdom, is their inspiration.

Good dance is at root a spirituality of *real presence* to our bodies, our fellow dancers, and our environment. It heightens the senses to realities beyond the visible. As a spiritual practice in a busy world, Wisdom-led movement, movement that involves *being moved* rather than forcing a spiritual ascent, can lead us into a deeper awareness of the presence of Christ. It helps us know the reality of creation and of ourselves, in stillness.

Overcoming the Stars

Astrology is forbidden by Scripture and Christian tradition insofar as it attempts to predict the future and denies human free will, God's providence, and the possibility of saving change. The zodiacs and astrological clocks in medieval churches (figure 10) challenge this culture. Christian cosmology accepts that the stars and their movements and conjunctions may indeed influence us, which is partially supported by science: the sun and moon are known to govern ocean tides.

But Christian cosmology deepens this: the negative influence of the stars is the influence of the fallen angels. This helps us understand the story of the exodus of Israel from Egypt and Abraham's departure from "Ur of the Chaldeans" as liberation from magic and predictive astrology. But the sun and moon are given as signs and season in Genesis (1:14-18), and the patriarchs are represented as twelve stars. The twelve loaves in the temple represented the zodiac, while the learned shine like stars/angels. It is possible that temple priests started to worship the constellations—worshiping angels, and used the knowledge of the fallen angels as magic.

The Magi, probably priests of the Zoroastrian religion, which is strong on predictive astrology, were guided by a star to Christ. Christ is the true end of astrology, because he restored the angels/stars to their true orbit. The letters of Paul especially speak of our battle with "principalities and powers," which are the names of angelic ranks, and of Christ overcoming them. John saw the heavenly sign of the Woman (Virgo) in Revelation (figure 11), and the twelve apostles are the foundations of the heavenly city because they have ascended, having overcome the influence of the fallen stars. The early Church, in addition to attacking the fatalism of astrology, shows evidence of rereading of the signs, such as Zeno's instruction to the

newly baptized where Christ is the Ram and Lion, and Gemini is the Old and New Testaments. This reconciliation of differences into one that this implies suggests that for Gemini, the proverbial instability of "the Twins" is redeemed as *harmony*, the work of Wisdom. The stars are not denied, but the influence of the fallen stars is replaced with that of the good stars/angels. Hence the Easter Passover—the old fallen cosmology is left behind, only to be redeemed.

This Christian reading of astrology fits with the Jungian idea of reconciling the dark "shadow" side of the psyche and offers insights into the cosmologies constructed by sufferers of psychosis. Some Gnostic cosmologies may have been the product of mental illness, while the sheer power of the influence of the fallen angels/stars shows our absolute need for God to take flesh and come and save us. In this world we're in a battle, but belonging to the *community* of Christ's Body, the Church, in which revelation has been passed down by eyewitnesses, also saves us from the psychological dangers of isolation. In the Church and its liturgy, Christ gives us a safe place to raise our unconscious to the conscious level: in him we are becoming victors over the fallen cosmos and mediators of Christ's healing.

Wisdom's Liturgy

The loss of Christian cosmology seems to be a major cause of problems and divisions in the celebration of liturgy. "Solemn" liturgy has sometimes been misused as a vehicle of social oppression by effectively treating the state as the perfect cosmos. Alternative forms, such as the liberation theology-inspired *Missa Campesina*, run a risk of losing all sense of the supernatural and of mystery.

According to an ancient understanding, the Jerusalem temple was a microcosm of creation, built according to the heavenly model of the tabernacle that Moses saw on the mountain. The holy of holies in the temple corresponded to day one of creation and the House of God. The temple liturgy mediated God's renewal of the whole creation through the at-onement for sins, the healing of broken bonds. The liturgy involved movement and music that was meant to be participation in the angelic liturgy. This was the knowledge that Wisdom taught through the temple and that the priests needed to know.

Some of the priests probably abused the knowledge, playing with the knowledge of the fallen angels and deserting Wisdom. The ensuing "cleanup" emphasized the law, but lost Wisdom. In Christ's perfect sacrifice or "making holy," the ancient understanding is restored and humankind raised to a new consciousness: we become the microcosm, the royal priesthood of creation. God reconciles all things to himself in heaven and on earth through

Christ, "making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1:19-20). Christ has passed through the veil and entered the holy of holies, as the Letter to the Hebrews teaches, and has obtained a *liturgy* much more excellent than the old (Heb 8:6). Hebrews and Revelation, with their cosmic liturgies, may reflect how the early Church celebrated the liturgy. The use of the veil or screen (figure 13) was not originally understood as excluding the people, but when it opened (like the tearing of the veil on Good Friday), the heavens or depths of reality, the "more" in Christianity, was revealed from within.

With the close connection between liturgy and knowledge, it's likely that the true *gnosis* or knowledge passed down to Peter, James, and John by Christ himself, according to Clement of Alexandria, contained principles on how to celebrate the liturgy. Liturgies grew as liturgists responded in Wisdom to signs of the times. When the knowledge was lost, probably by the end of the Middle Ages with the discovery that the earth was not the physical center of the universe, this also led to degeneration and injustice in the liturgy—with a tendency toward a hierarchy of law and power replacing the authority of Wisdom. An example is the replacement of the angel costumes of the boy dancers of the Spanish cathedrals with soldiers' costumes. The reason for the sanctuary/nave distinction was therefore misunderstood. And many details of liturgy—such as the priest's gestures—could easily become incomprehensible.

Although we have moved on a lot from legalistic Christianity and have (arguably) become kinder, more welcoming churches, the loss of mystery does not help many people who are not religious and seek a deeper spirituality, much as they respect the unconditional love of Christ that many churches live out through charity work. To really love, we need to *know* how to love the other person, to know their deepest needs. If we recover knowledge in Wisdom, rather than having to reinvent (yet again) our liturgy, we could celebrate our liturgy more consciously with true spiritual enlightenment and inclusive participation. In particular, we would understand the procession as following Christ in the Angelic Dance according to Wisdom's choreography, to return to the Father. We would understand repentance as entering into God's knowledge and being raised up from the sin of the world; we would really hear the proclamation of his Word as a healing *sound*. All our movement in the liturgy would be moving deeper into the heavens, deeper into reality, and we would understand the Eucharist with true thanksgiving as God transforming the whole cosmos through the royal priesthood of Christ in which we share. We would understand baptism as launching us on a journey into knowledge, confirmation as the Spirit's gift of knowledge (which we would need to teach to the candidates), and reconciliation and anointing as sacraments of deep healing. Marriage and holy

orders would be understood as part of the proper ordering of the cosmos through Wisdom. And we would understand the Liturgy of the Hours better, while including our devotions as aids in the integration of the whole person, all ordered toward the great cosmic liturgy.

The Movement of the Cosmic Cross

So how does the lost Knowledge of Christ help us answer the questions of an "Age of Revelation"? In chapter 4 we talked about the outward movement of Christians in a century of the cross. This sense of being pushed to go out beyond the comfort of our denominations or, indeed, of Christianity recalls the expansive movement of the Cosmic Cross and the Heavenly Journey. So we find that Christian denominations no longer define themselves *against* other Christian denominations. And through the work of missionaries, we see not only what is not of Christ in other religions but also deep human yearnings and teachings that are actually those of Christ. The huge advance in communications has made us conscious of global poverty. We have—where we have been prudent—been able to make common cause with agnostics and atheists in fighting against poverty and other action for the common good. Working together has helped us understand each other better. We have started to hear what the other is actually saying, "where they're coming from," rather than attacking "straw man" arguments. And we have also realized that, *unknown to us*—because knowledge and repentance are about the rise from unconscious to conscious, from ignorance to enlightenment—that we have been all too human centered. We have forgotten the environment that has been hurt by our sin. We have actually forgotten that we are *part* of creation. And the mystery, the miracle of this dynamic of the cross, this *movement*, is that the more we lose ourselves, the more we become truly ourselves. A particular challenge, as we've often observed, is that loss of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which is so cosmological, has lost us a spiritual resource for responding to the environmental crisis. Whereas the spiritual but not religious people, broadly neo-Gnostic, are naturally inclined to ecology.

All this points us to a *different way of knowing* from what commonly passes as knowledge in society. It's knowledge as a *journey* beyond what is familiar to us. I think the beauty of the lost Knowledge of Christ is that it's not about instant answers—God save us from people who know everything and understand nothing. Rather, the Knowledge is a sure *way* to deeper knowledge, a way which is itself an act of true repentance, of coming to know ourselves and the creation as God knows. "I am the *way*, the truth

and the life," said Jesus (John 14:6). It is about *Wisdom* the choreographer calling us to move, to follow Christ. That's how we gain *insight* into particular situations—we can see deeper into what's going on under the surface.

Let's start with ourselves. The lost Knowledge of Christ is Wisdom's gift to me that *metanoia*, true repentance, is not about beating myself up for the sin of the world, not about trying to please God with as many good works as possible, not about denying the reality of suffering—including my own. Repentance begins with acknowledging the truth about my own situation, my gifts, and my weaknesses. I am present to myself, body and soul, without judging. I acknowledge influences, good and bad. Avoiding the trap of painful introspection that comes from exclusively human-centered spiritualities, I listen to my senses. If I feel moved to sing or move, I do. What am I experiencing from my environment, the people, and the nature all around me? What are the senses beckoning me toward that which is "behind" or in the heavens, which are the depths of nature? On the basis of what my senses tell me, what, in the light of Wisdom, does the Knowledge of Christ tell me? For what do I actually need to pray for grace to change? Where have I fallen into the sin of the world and need to ask forgiveness?

In whatever group we find ourselves within our church, let's be similarly present. What riches are we receiving? Rather than beginning with "what needs to be changed"—especially in worship, so often a place of church culture wars—what is actually there? In the light of Wisdom, what does the lost Knowledge of Christ tell us about how we pray as community? That is, how we repent, how we read/proclaim Scripture, how we sing and move, how we mark rites of passage in our community, and how we teach and care for people? What is good? What seeds of growth are present that we hadn't seen yet? In our probable diversity of spiritualities, what connectors does the Knowledge offer? What is Wisdom telling us *together* that we could improve, change, or let go of? What are we anxious about improving/changing/letting go of—knowing that it's okay to acknowledge our crosses? Where do we find ourselves under the curse of the law ("we must," "I should"), and what does the law of the Spirit ordain for this situation? For example, what might the Knowledge say both to the worship band and the choir and organist? What might it say to our care of the bereaved? To our teaching of confirmation candidates and those preparing for marriage?

Moving out to the ecumenical, that is, interchurch dialogue, we can similarly look at what we all have together. What is the real complementary difference—maybe even things that Wisdom is calling us to borrow? Where do we disagree? Could Christian cosmology help? For example, where we disagree about what happens when we die—I'm thinking especially of

purgatory—what light can the teaching of the seven heavens shine? What can the Wisdom tradition say to our arguments about the Blessed Virgin Mary? What might it say to—within and between our churches—about the feminine side of God and the position and ministry of women? What can the liturgy teachings say about our worship? What about arguments over the Eucharist and other sacraments?

For those who teach theology, in school or university, and are engaged in research—which now, happily, has a strong ecumenical context—what new connections does the Knowledge enable us to make? When "knowledge creation" and "knowledge transfer" are buzz words in the academic world, and there is huge competition to get articles into journals and to assure tenure by being experts on a small "niche" subject—can Wisdom help us stand together to regain the *big* picture? Not just to know (maybe with ultimately useless knowledge) but to understand? To discuss and really collaborate rather than just debate and compete? (Indeed, given the often controversial nature of the work of cosmological theologians such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Matthew Fox, perhaps the Knowledge of Christ might shed some more light on their work—and offer correctives where needed?)

Moving further out to our relationship with other religions, much has already been achieved—although on a local level, religion is still used as an excuse for conflict. But on the *mystical* level of different religions, we've seen real connections as we've rediscovered the lost Knowledge of Christ. Where people of different religions have stopped to actually contemplate this cosmos that is our home, it seems that they have gazed into reality in similar ways and sometimes found similar things.

I started to discover this with the first public showings of the Cosmos dance project in 2008–2009 (figure 12): what I had envisaged as a Christian artists' project in fact attracted performers of all religions and spiritualities. We were able to work together without compromising the faith of Christians or of anyone else. At this stage, Christian cosmology was just an intuition: just as the mystics found that knowing begins as unknowing because the depths of reality are so unfamiliar to us. Through researching for this book, I've learned that Sufi Muslims whirl as Jewish and Christian angels dance. Hindus have mandalas like the paintings Hildegard made of her cosmic visions. Traditional Indian musicians like the early Christians know the power of sound. Buddhism, the religion of the Maya, and Jewish Kabbalah speak of a layered universe or multiple heavens. The ancient understanding of baptism set the initiate on a journey to the eighth day, the Day of the Lord, which is the number of cosmic transformation in the ancient Chinese *I Ching*.

Of course, scholars and wise people have encountered each other's traditions, they've traveled and reported back on their experiences (see Sir

39:1-4). Migrations and invasions have had their influences. *But in all the traditions, there are apparent mystics who have had experiences that have been written down.* Perhaps, rather than trying desperately to work out how Christian cosmology might have influenced the Maya (or vice versa), might it be simpler to say that by the grace of God's Holy Spirit, so loving and so generous, mystics in different places and different times (including today) have been given to experience the depths of reality? It is possible too that some visions came from false ascents by the power of the fallen angels. But the diversity itself of the cosmologies is beyond simply "true and false." Remembering too that the diversity of the Christian mystics' experiences of ascending through the heavens (see chap. 5) shows that what mystics see are images, powerful signs, and symbols (like art) but not *an exact copy of the reality*. The reality might be too much for us.

We've talked throughout the book about the relationship between the Knowledge of Christ and nonreligious spiritualities. We can be grateful to them that they've prompted us to rediscover our own tradition, and perhaps their appearance (or reappearance, as they're neo-Gnostic) in our time is providential. I find that spiritual but not religious people can "hear" Christianity in the language of cosmology and connect in the strong spirituality of ecology that Christian Knowledge offers. The feminine of Wisdom is also attractive to them, as is the embrace of the arts, particularly the very embodied art of dance. And I find that they deeply admire the community sense of Christians, which is largely absent from nonreligious spiritualities, being as they are essentially individualistic.

We also offer the spiritual but not religious a gentle but deep challenge: even as it liberates us from self-punishing spiritualities, Christian cosmology takes sin and evil very seriously, seeing it in angelic and cosmic terms. Indeed, the sheer power of the influence of the fallen angels/stars shows our need for nothing less than a divine savior. We wholeheartedly accept the essential connection between spiritual development and psychological integration—something on which the seven heavens doctrine is very strong. Yet because we know we live in a fallen world, we accept that full healing and integration may not be completed in this life. But it will be completed in the next, and we look forward to a cosmic resurrection which is beginning already.

And we respect the individual, with words of wisdom free from any authoritarian kind of law, while showing the therapeutic need for community—both giving and receiving. We also show the blessing of an objective revelation of mysteries in a safe place, especially in the liturgy, rather than the distorted knowledge of wandering stars who can take away our sanity, even as they claim to heal.

And Wisdom Meets the Philosophers

Moving beyond religion, how should Christians speak in the "public square"? When Paul came to Corinth he made no show of oratory or philosophy but claimed knowledge only of Christ, and him crucified, because the language of the cross appears foolishness to those who are not on the way to salvation. It destroys the wisdom of the "wise" (1 Cor 1:17-25; 2:1). In other words, we cannot *reduce* Christianity to philosophy. And the ultimate reason for this is because we live in a fallen world. Experience teaches us that we don't even know ourselves properly, which suggests that our grip on the rest of reality is bound to be limited. But, like Paul at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31), we can and do engage with everyone who is, as we should be, humbly seeking after truth: the followers of an *unknown* God. After all, philosophy means "love of wisdom."

For a long time, theologians and apologists of the Christian faith have tried to demonstrate that belief in Christ is *compatible* with science. We've been careful to use rational, logical arguments, drawing on all the best of Western philosophy. Within theology—whether biblical scholarship, Christian ethics, spirituality, or just a good Sunday sermon—we use reason and logic *enlightened* by faith. Faith does not destroy reason: it raises it up.

The danger is that to avoid sounding as if we have our heads in the clouds, we can overdo the logical arguments. Proofs for the existence of God are not at all wrong in themselves, but overusing them puts us at risk of falling into a trap. We can, unwittingly, fall into the rationalism of the hard atheism we oppose. Rationalism is actually unreasonable because it doesn't see the limits of reason. It doesn't listen to the senses and their capacity to point to realities beyond the physical.

In this book we've mentioned great philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Plato wrote down (and no doubt developed) the discussions between his teacher Socrates and his pupils and other philosophers—the so-called "Socratic dialogues." To this day, the "Socratic method" is understood as teaching by answering people's questions with questions, helping them discover the truth for themselves, and discovering what is already in them (perhaps not unlike Jesus' parables): *education* literally means "leading out."

Socrates was a sort of martyr: he was put to death by the Athenian state because he fearlessly criticized its oppressive government. He annoyed too many powerful people by asking awkward questions, all the while claiming it was because he himself was ignorant and was seeking answers. It's obvious why Christian thinkers were moved by his story.

The Greek philosophers before Socrates are known as the "pre-Socratics." Their works exist only in fragments and later quotations and are very strange

by modern standards. For one thing, they're written as poetry, not as dialogues or arguments. Many of these are cosmogonies, accounts of how the cosmos came to be. They often speak in riddles, not logical arguments. Heraclitus (late sixth to early fifth century BC) claimed that "listening not to me but to the Logos it is wise to agree that all things are one." He also said that "God is day-night, winter-summer, war-peace, satiety-hunger" (i.e., all the opposites), and that he is altered as fire when mixed with spices and is named according to the scent of the spice. Nature likes to hide itself and (in a fragment quoted by St. Clement of Alexandria) the order (*kosmos*) of all things is a fire made neither by any god nor by people. Heraclitus also complained that people celebrated the mysteries in an unholy manner.[4]

In the light of Christian cosmology, this is not totally strange. The Logos is familiar to us, day one of creation, the original unity, and the unity to which God wanted to restore all things. We can see day, night, etc., as the sons of God, the angels (see Ps 82:1; Job 1:6) of the elements coming forth from God, and God as the uncreated fire at the heart of the universe. Heraclitus's complaint about the unholy celebration of mysteries also suggests he objected to magic.

And Pythagoras, whom we've already talked about, greatly inspired Plato's cosmology. Although, again, we have his works only in quotations—many of them late and through the lens of later thinkers—nevertheless, there are lots of connections with Christian cosmology and especially the temple cosmology that came before it. Pythagoras's pupils lived with him like an enclosed (and abstemious) religious community. There was an outer circle of the "listeners" and an inner circle of the "learned." He insisted on silence—not teaching everything to everybody—and taught from behind a *screen*. He taught about the cosmic meaning of number, and about the fiery cube of the *tetraktys* at the heart of the universe, which was the true source of wisdom. He apparently prophesied and worked miracles—he may have possessed "uncommon psychic powers."[5] Of course, lots of esoteric mystery religions have behaved like this the world over. Pythagoras also seems to have believed in reincarnation and imposed superstitious dietary laws. But there are *so many connections* with the temple and with Christian cosmology—the screen, the fiery cube, and so on.

Parmenides, about whom Plato wrote a dialogue, argued that "being" (which seems to be everything) simply *is*. It's one, uncreated, continuous, unchanging, and perfect. Philosophers have struggled to make heads or tails of this ever since. But they pay less attention to Parmenides's prologue, in which he speaks of being carried in a chariot and being brought by the maiden daughters of the Sun to gates of the paths of night and day. Justice held further doors bolted over them. The maidens persuaded justice to

unbolt the doors, and he was taken into the house of "the goddess" who taught him the "well-rounded truth."[6] This is so reminiscent of the experience of Enoch, the just man, being rushed up to the House of God. Was the "goddess" here Wisdom, teaching Parmenides about the original unity behind the screen, the veil of the heavenly sanctuary?

Now it may be that Pythagoras, for one, had some contact with the priests of the Jewish temple,[7] though it's hard to prove. But a simpler explanation is that these poet-philosophers, for all their limited knowledge and imperfections, were mystics. And if this is so, then Western philosophy is ultimately founded on mysticism.

We have, of course, come a long way. And even now, after all we have come through, how on earth could we hope to use apparently earth-centered Christian cosmology to argue with a hard atheist who believes evolution has got rid of the need for God?

Because Christian cosmology starts with us: the view of the universe from *here*. Copernicus's discovery of a sun-centered universe sets us free from all self-centered interpretations of Christian knowledge. It's a journey in Wisdom away from the false image of self to the true centering in God. We only see and know as well as we know ourselves, our limitations, and our true gifts.

The View through the Screen

Most people don't consciously study philosophy. But we all do philosophy whenever we face the "big questions": Where do we come from? Where are we going? What's the meaning of life? What happens when we die?

A common way people do their philosophy now is through art—museums, music, dance, and so on. Art can give us *another angle* on things—the invisible, the hidden, the unspoken. Call art secular *metanoia* if you like. And as we saw in chapter 8, artists, by working at the unseen levels of reality, are working in the heavens, which are a battleground. So art deserves our engagement as Christians, because it's about the big questions—including how the cosmos is. Artists deserve and *need* our special care, because by and through the Knowledge of Jesus Christ we know what a great vocation is theirs and the enormous spiritual and psychological challenges they face.

It's perhaps particularly appropriate that our time has seen a rise in public interest in art because ours is the age of the screen. What does that mean? As philosopher Denis Villepelet has said, our lives are now both enabled and dominated by screens: TV screen, phone screens, computer screens, and display screens in cafés, restaurants, and transportation hubs

(figure 13). We might say the screen is the new place—we can easily be fixated by it, unbound and unconcerned by our location. With the Internet, especially, I (it's not a communal activity) am offered an almost limitless choice of information, retail possibilities, entertainment, and so on. And the emphasis of technological development is on increasing the speed of the Internet.[8] This is good in itself, but if it's coming from a place of fear—we have to have it all *now* because there's no future—then it's a problem. And the screen is *virtual*. It may help us access an ultimate reality, or it may be a modern form of Gnosticism, an escape from this physical world (like Internet "second lives").

So the turn to art may be evidence that people want to go deeper than the screen. Christian cosmology, following the temple, is about the *view through the screen to the holy of holies: the moment of revelation* (figure 14). We're given a deeper view of reality, embracing the whole cosmos. It *doesn't tell us the future*. But it does give us a deeper view into the *present*, a deeper view into *now*. The prophets were people who saw, in the Spirit, the depths of now. They saw the consequences of our present actions for the future.

And this glimpse is the knowledge that is given to us because, as Christians, we have committed ourselves to the way of unconditional love, for the neighbor we cannot see, and the tiniest plants and stones that can never say thank-you to us—yet give us so much. If we are to reverse global warming, knowledge of the predicament is not enough. We need love to drive us to change. Knowledge without love is a destructive power; love without knowledge is well-meaning ignorance. Love with knowledge is to know and love as God does: from the true center of the universe.

So when we're faced with the awkward questions that divide us, that divide our churches and divide our societies, let's speak from the view through the screen. We don't have to give "the answer": we need to give Wisdom. My poet friend Sarah de Nordwall, founder of the Bard School artists' group, was recently asked on TV whether the real issue was modesty of dress or women's freedom. She simply invited her listeners to think about what it meant to look at another and to be seen, and to be body and soul. She opened doors to the depths of reality in an age of revelation.

The lost Knowledge of Christ has made me think, not least because there's so much more to discover. Researching for this book has been a bit like visiting St. Peter's Basilica in Rome—the farther we go in, the bigger we realize it is. I'm well aware there are big gaps in this book. In chapter 6, for example, on cosmology in Christian music, I jump from the *Odes of Solomon* (first to second century) forward to Celtic songs (translated in the nineteenth century) via Latin hymns, and then Hildegard of Bingen (twelfth century). What about St. Augustine's writings on music? What

about Bach? And all the questions arising from Christian cosmology? This is where the project needs you. We need to hear your experiences. We need to hear from scholars and therapists, pastors and artists, parents and hermits, and anyone who's interested in the cosmic dimension of spirituality. And I'm well aware how necessarily provisional my interpretations are, so do disagree with me! Please join the discussion, or get a new one going, at lostknowledgeofchrist.wordpress.com.

And perhaps, in our own time, those who feel furthest from Christian faith will receive the same stirrings in the depths of the unconscious as Simon Peter, when Jesus promised to make him and his brother fishers of people. May many, like Peter, receive Christ's true knowledge of the cosmos and see the lamp shining in a dark place (2 Pet), the day dawning, and the morning star rising in their hearts. May we all share in the divine nature and together grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ for a new heaven and new earth. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Appendix

The Lost Knowledge of Christ and the Enneagram

The Enneagram has become a popular tool in spiritual guidance and in formation in some religious communities. It is also used in personality tests, which can help prevent clashes in teamwork by assigning roles only to the appropriate character type. Within the churches, the Enneagram is the subject of some controversy. Some spiritual guides and formators find it an invaluable tool for helping people find their strengths and weaknesses, receive healing, and move forward. They see it as a wisdom tradition inspired by the Holy Spirit. Others see it as at best dubious, if not of occult origin, a form of manipulation and even of determinism that would deny God's grace. In other words, "This is how you are, this is your personality type, and that's all there is to be said."

The well-known Christian spiritual guides Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert have written a book on the Enneagram from a Christian perspective.[1] They argue that although it was reintroduced to the West by esotericist George Gurdjieff in 1916, who thought that it went back to the Muslim Sufi mystics and maybe ultimately to ancient Egypt and Babylon via Pythagoras, we can in fact find the Enneagram in the writings of the fourth-century Christian monk Evagrius Ponticus. Evagrius speaks of eight or nine vices opposed to the virtues that block the way to God and peace of heart.[2] This is probably inspired by Jesus' teaching about the unclean spirit that is driven out, wanders, and then returns with seven other spirits more evil than itself, so that the last state of the person is more evil than the first (Matt 12:43-45). The eight or nine vices were eventually codified by Pope St. Gregory I as the Seven Deadly Sins. In chapter 5 we noted that the

Seven Deadly Sins form Dante's structure of purgatory, which also showed parallels with the seven heavens in Christian cosmology.

Richard Rohr says he was taught Enneagram by his spiritual guide, Cardinal Jim O'Brien, *as a "secret knowledge" not to be passed on*. This sounds very like the cautious approach of the early Church to the gift of knowledge, *gnosis*. But this gift gave Rohr apparently amazing powers of perception regarding the people he was guiding, seeing "heart to heart" like the Desert Fathers, though he admits it made him feel somewhat dishonest. The idea, though, was to use it in a similar way to the discernment of spirits in Ignatian spirituality.[3]

The Enneagram works on nine personality types. According to the insight on personality drawn from the Enneagram, our greatest gifts are understood, in a very sobering way, to be what also can destroy us. Rohr and Ebert see the gifts as each corresponding to a *lost cosmology*—our intuitive understanding of how the (our) world once was when it was perfect, before the Fall, which makes our lives less than perfect now. So, in table 2, we see that those people who would identify or be identified as "ones" on the Enneagram—people who are, in practice, often natural leaders and managers—have *anger* as their root sin, something rooted in the gut. They can be opinionated and dogmatic. They have a lost cosmology of grandeur and majesty, when they were king. This is what they want back, what drives their behavior.

Table 2: The Enneagram and Its Cosmology

Enneagram	Evagrius	Body Centre	Lost Cosmology (Rohr & Ebert, 45–49)	Color (Rohr & Ebert, 295)
1	Anger	Gut	Grandeur, majesty—happy 7 world.	Silver—moonlight, change & growth
2	Pride	Heart	Knew that as children they were the special happy 4, centre of universe, the chosen—once knew loveliness of it all, beauty of God.	Red—life, power, passion, earth
3	Vanity/Thirst for Glory	Heart	Once knew the vulnerability of all things—so need endless success and feedback, judge failure harshly.	Yellow—dynamic, radiant, eccentric, vulnerable
4	Self-Pity/ Envy	Heart	Once knew a PERFECT COSMOLOGY of which they were an essential part—though seem creative, very absolute. Make films about garden but don't go back there.	Bright Violet—Passiontide. Mystical conflict
5	Avarice	Head	Absolute power of God, genius of controlling all parts in one working universe. Go inside to conquer by learning and listening.	Blue—introversion, repose, distance, feminine (contemplate depths of sky & sea)
6	[Fear, not in Evagrius]	Head	Utterly reconciled and peaceful world. Try to force it by proving and imposing laws.	Beige—fits in, *humus*
7	Gluttony	Head	World of enoughness—satisfaction & essence. Now they will outdo God and not incorporate dark side. Hate stinginess because stingy.	Green—*viriditas* (Hildegarde of Bingen), joie de vivre, need to mature (greenhorn)
8	Lust	Gut	God was warmth, food, protection, empathy, relationship, TOTAL UNDERSTANDING. Really little children. I will protect the little ones from crying. Defended against compassion because know God is compassion. Try to force river rather than floating on it.	Black & White—clarity, oppositions, also totality of creative powers
9	Laziness/ "Acedia"	Gut	It was all about love, all connected, operative and EFFECTIVE. LOVE imprint—enjoyable, but don't enjoy themselves.	Gold—gods, kings, saints—Golden Age

Discovering that "root sin" makes us feel broken and vulnerable. Our greatest gift, it seems, has become our enemy. But we are to love our enemies (compare this with Jung on the shadow, chap. 8). Because we realize through our repentance just how much we need God, he can then open up far greater possibilities. The dictator is the false self, the "one's" Original Sin; but by the healing of grace, the dictator can be set free and realize the true soul child, the King—as he or she was anointed at baptism. The "fallen one" becomes a "redeemed one." Fallen angels versus angels of God?

As Rohr and Ebert acknowledge, there is a real risk of pigeonholing people to start with, and in fact many versions of the Enneagram have subtypes as well as the Nine. Also, for someone who already has a low self-esteem (more people, perhaps, than we realize), the Enneagram could be devastating. Just as the ascent through the seven heavens is one way—in fact several ways, according to the different accounts of ascent—of guiding the spiritual journey, so the Enneagram is another.

The Enneagram is also essentially different from the seven (or nine) heavens in that it does not consist of an ascent, either through the heavens or the chakras of the body. So for example, both "ones" and "nines" have their center in the gut (as well as much else in common). The "heavens" model perhaps reminds us of the need for an integrated ascent to the divine: not that we abandon the earth and the lower chakras, but simply that day-to-day life, its joys and troubles, are often more immediately physical. So a withdrawal—like the fasting, abstinence, and almsgiving of Lent—may be needed to help us tune into the higher levels of our being, to reconnect outward to our neighbor and the cosmos, where the Holy Spirit wants to lead us.

We might also want to compare the idea of nine heavens (or the Enneagram) with the traditional Catholic devotion of the Novena, the nine-day prayer, usually for the intercession of a saint for a particular need. Although the nine days are traditionally in honor of the Virgin Mary's motherhood, I've noticed that praying for this period of time has a discernible effect on me. By really focusing on whatever it is I'm praying for, I become more aware of what I actually want from God (cf. Jas 4:3). Prayer does not change God but it does open us to the loving God who wants to change us into our true selves. Prayer is repentance, becoming aware by the Spirit, moving from unconscious to conscious—from ignorance to knowledge.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. For the full story, see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage, 1979/1989), xiii–xxxvi. For the texts, see *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume*, ed. J.M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1979/1989).

2. See "Test Those Mysterious Codices: Mistrust, but Verify," *The Economist* blog, March 1, 2013, http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2013/03/test-those-mysterious-codices; see also "Jewish Christian Lead Codices, *Economist* Article and Margaret Barker," in *A Catholic Jew Pontificates* blog, March 12, 2013, http://aronbengilad.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/jordan-lead-codices-and-economist.html.

3. Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: The Exclusive Interview with Pope Francis," trans. Massimo Faggioli et al., *Thinking Faith* (September 19, 2013), http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20130919_1.htm.

4. Pontifical Council for Culture, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: *Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age*, 6.2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html.

5. For example, in Matthew 13:11 Jesus speaks of "the kingdom of heaven" (RSV) but translating the original Greek literally we get "the kingdom of the heavens." And in one version of Proverbs 8:30, Wisdom describes herself as being like "a master workman," but the Greek is *harmozousa*, which means literally a "harmonizer."

Chapter 2

1. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, rev. ed. (New York: Bantam, 1993), 81–104, 206.

2. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 90.

3. David Burner, *Making Peace with the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 117–18.

4. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html.

5. See Violet Tweedale, *The Cosmic Christ* (London: Rider, 1930); and Tau Malachi, *Gnosis of the Cosmic Christ: A Gnostic Christian Kabbalah* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Books, 2004).

6. Louis Jacolliot, *La Bible dans l'Inde, Vie de Iezeus Christna* [The Bible in India, Life of Iezeus Christna] (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869), available on Google Books. There *is* a well-founded tradition that the apostle Thomas evangelized India in the Christian text *The Acts of Thomas*. This text dates from ca. AD 200 or earlier.

7. Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life* (2003), 1.5.

8. See http://www.patriarchate.org/environment.

9. Carl G. Jung, "Seven Sermons to the Dead," in *The Gnostic Jung*, ed. Robert A. Segal, trans. H. G. Baynes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 181–93.

10. Author's translation.

11. Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 34.

12. See Emma Heathcote-James, *Seeing Angels* (London: John Blake, 2001), 75; and Dominic White, "Are Angels Just a Matter of Faith?," *New Blackfriars* 86 (November 2005): 568–83.

13. Miriam Greenspan, *Healing through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2004), 7.

14. Ibid., 60.

15. E.g., *Kindred Spirit* magazine, www.kindredspirit.co.uk.

16. Pontifical Council, *Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life*, 6.2.

17. For more on this, including Hermetic thought on music and some scientific studies, see Jocelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 11–45.

18. See James Webb, *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980).

19. Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, 35.

20. Ibid., 89.

21. Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to Ecstasy: A Healing Journey for the Untamed Spirit*, rev. ed. (Novato, CA: New World Library/Nataraj Publishing, 1998), 2–3.

22. Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, 89.

23. E.g., "Spiritual Growth Prophecies: Empowering Ways to Find Peace and Growth in a World of Chaos," www.2012-spiritual-growth-prophecies.com/age-of-aquarius.html.

24. Rex E. Bills, *The Rulership Book* (Tempe, AZ: The American Federation of Astrologers, 1974), 369–71; Geoffrey Dean, *Recent Advances in Natal Astrology: A Critical Review; 1900–1976* (Bromley: The Astrological Association, 1977), 54.

25. C. G. Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 9, pt. 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 94n84.

26. Marion Bowman, "Alternative Spirituality in Glastonbury," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 83–104.

27. Ibid., 89.

Chapter 3

1. Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967): 1203–7. Online at http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/lwhite.htm.

2. Theologians often use the original French word, *ressourcement*.

3. The books of Wisdom and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) aren't so well known because the Protestant tradition regard them as not "canonical" (authentic books of the Bible), instead assigning them to the "Apocrypha." They're valued "for example of life and instruction of manners" (*Book of Common Prayer*, article 6) but not held as the inspired Word of God. They are included in the canon by Catholics and Orthodox Christians, however. The reason for this disagreement is that the "apocryphal" books—Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, and 1 and 2 Maccabees—are found not in the Hebrew Bible but only in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Bible made by the Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt, in the late third century BC and later added to. The Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century felt that the Hebrew Bible, being in the original language, must be the more authentic. But now Protestant as well as Catholic biblical scholars are questioning this. The Hebrew Bible we have today dates from the Synod of Jamnia, a meeting of Jewish leaders after the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Because so much was lost in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and also because of tensions within the Jewish community and the disputes with the Christians, the Synod set the canon of Scripture once and for all. Books such as Wisdom and Sirach, being late compositions (probably of the second or first centuries BC) and added to the Septuagint at that time, were excluded. But even in the books Jews and Christian unanimously accept, there are many detail differences between the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. Until recently most scholars believed that these were due to Christian scribes adding things ("interpolations"). Greek was the common language of the first Christians, so the Septuagint was their natural choice for reading the Old Testament. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found at Qumran, however (see chap. 1), the parts of the Hebrew Bible preserved there dated in some cases back to 408 BC and were often found to be closer to the Septuagint translations. So the Septuagint, for the most part, is very likely a translation of an older form of the Hebrew Scriptures, one closer to the Scriptures Jesus himself read in the synagogues. See Margaret Barker, "Text and Context," in *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 294–315, online at http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf.

4. Jean Daniélou, "Les Traditions Secrètes des Apôtres" [The Secret Traditions of the Apostles], *Eranos Jahrbuch* 21 (1962): 199–215; Benedict XVI, Easter Vigil homily, April 3, 2010: http://www.ewtn.com/vnews/getstory.asp?number=101417.

5. For example, Procopius of Gaza, *Commentary on Proverbs*, 9; Maximus the Confessor, *Centuries on Love*, 1.23-31.

6. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

7. Ibid., 256.

8. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies (Stromateis)* 1.1; 6.7, and *Hypotyposes* ("Outlines"), a lost work quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.2.1. For more, see Dominic White, "Contemporary Spiritualities and Christianity: Is There an Authentic Christian Gnosis?," *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1047 (September 2012): 580–97. In the eighteenth century, Clement fell under suspicion in Western Christianity and was removed from the canon of saints. Whether this was because of his extensive use of allegory in talking about the Christian faith or because of *gnosis* is not known. He is still celebrated as a saint in the Eastern churches. Pope Emeritus Benedict defended Clement's teaching on *gnosis* in a general audience in Rome on April 18, 2007: www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20070418_en.html.

9. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 3.3.1; 3.2.2. Irenaeus also mentions and dismisses the Gnostics' appeal to apocrypha (1.20.1). Clearly the apocrypha were already becoming "guilty by association" with the Gnostics, who were, in any case, reading them out of context.

10. Mishnah, *Hagigah* 2.1.

11. Author's translation.

12. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).

13. St. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66.

14. Author's translation.

15. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.17.

16. *Didache* 9.

17. Author's translation.

18. Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 34; Gregory of Nyssa, *Paschal Homily* 2.7.

19. *Acts of Peter,* 38(9); *Clementine Homilies* 17.9.

20. Mishnah, *Hagigah* 2.1.

21. *Acts of John* 98.

22. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Letter to the Emperor Constantius* 4.

23. From the Stanbrook Abbey Hymnal. In *The Divine Office: The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite*, vol. 2, 573* (Hymn no. 21).

24. Herbert McCabe, "Good Friday: The Mystery of the Cross," in *God Matters* (London & New York: Mowbray, 1987/2000), 92.

25. Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 9. Irenaeus actually counts the heavens from the top down—from God's point of view, so to speak—but as this is the exception, we count up from down here.

26. The "First Moved" is not to be confused with the better-known "First *Mover*" (or "Unmoved Mover"), which Aristotelian philosophy and medieval metaphysics identify with God.

27. Plato, *Timaeus* 35–37.

28. *Ascension of Isaiah* 7.1–9.18; Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 84.

29. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 4.16.2.

30. 2 Enoch 3–21. Note that some versions of 2 Enoch 21–22 give three more heavens, concerned in part with the zodiac (see chap. 8).

31. *Testament of Levi* 3.1-8.

32. *Epistle of the Apostles* 17–18 (Coptic).

33. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5.36.1-2.

34. Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 12b.

35. Was the seven heavens tradition already part of Judaism? It's hard to tell. I quoted the Talmud above, but as it dates in its written form from AD 400, we can't be sure that the seven heavens tradition didn't come later with Christianity. But we've seen that God created heaven*s*, plural, in Genesis. And in the Jewish apocryphon 1 Enoch, the angel's description of the content of the heavens (1 Enoch 60:11-12) can be read as sevenfold. The seven heavens is an example of a reality perhaps implicit in Judaism, which is revealed to us in its fullness in Christ.

36. Feast of the Archangel Michael and the other Bodiless Powers (November 8).

37. See Dominic White, "Are Angels Just a Matter of Faith?" *New Blackfriars* 86 (November 2005): 568–83.

38. Author's translation. The NRSV gives "rulers and authorities."

39. *Apostolic Tradition* 41.

Chapter 4

1. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

2. Cf. GS 39.

3. Author's translation.

4. Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), 112. I have inserted the scriptural chapter and verse.

5. See also Jeremiah 9:10-16.

6. See Margaret Barker, C*reation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

7. Barker, *The Lost Prophet*, 111.

8. *The Garden of Love*, from William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* (1789/1792), quoted here from the Dover Thrift Edition (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 40.

9. A. N. Wilson, *Winnie and Wolf* (London: Arrow Books, 2008).

10. Miriam Greenspan, *Healing through the Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2004), 163–64.

11. The intellectual and spiritual adventurer René Guénon (1886–1951), who became a Sufi sheikh, argued that the cross was a universal symbol of unity and human spiritual integration across many religious and spiritual traditions, including Hinduism and Islam. Although some of his interpretations and connections seem a little forced, he's a mine of information and offers a starting point for dialoguing on the cross with other religions. René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, trans. Angus Macnab (London: Luzac, 1958).

12. Plato, *Timaeus* 36c; *Republic* 616-617.

13. Philo, *On Planting*, 8-10, in *Philo*, vol. 3, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library, (London: William Heinemann/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 217.

14. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 262–93.

15. See Luc Renaut, "La description d'une croix cosmique par Jean de Gaza, poète palestinien du VIe siècle" [The description of a cosmic cross by John of Gaza, Palestinian poet of the sixth century], in *Iconographica: mélanges offerts à Piotr Skubiszewski*, ed. R. Favreau and M.-H. Debiès (Poitiers, France: 1999), 211–20.

16. *Acts of John*, 97–102.

17. "The Gospel of Peter," in Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 384–85.

18. The particular saying quoted here is very similar to one in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* (22).

19. Author's translation.

20. "The Acts of Peter, 38 (9)," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, trans. J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 425.

21. *Clementine Homilies* 17.9-11, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Peter Peterson (1886; reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 326–27. Online at www.compassionatespirit.com/Homilies/Book-17.htm.

22. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5.33.3-4; cf. *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 61.

23. C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Collected Works of C. G. Jung, vol. 9, pt. 1., 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 139.

24. *Christ Be Near*, by John Fennelly.

25. Facebook, "A Place to Be," reproduced with permission.

Chapter 5

1. See André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins*, Bollingen Series 35 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 19–23, 92.

2. Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, eds. and trans., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London: SPCK, 1968). Sections 16–23 concern us here. I have modernized the translation in places.

3. Ibid.

4. Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 20, plate 43.

5. To this day the book of Revelation (literally, "unveiling") is not read in the Byzantine Rite: rather, it's the basis of the liturgy itself.

6. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5.22.4; *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 12, 14.

7. Or, "you all know."

8. *Gospel of Philip* 21.

9. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61.

10. *Apostolic Tradition* 23.14 (the manuscripts vary here).

11. Quotations from the translation of E. Isaac in James H. Charlesworth., ed, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 5–89.

12. 1 Enoch 17; 41-44; 60; 73-80.

13. Philo, *Life of Moses*, 2.122-23.

14. Nicolas Sed, *La mystique cosmologique juive* [Jewish cosmological mysticism], Etudes Juives, vol. 16 (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1981), 295.

15. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 5.6.

16. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1832.

17. *Acts of John* 95; Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.17.1.

18. Miriam Lundy, *Sacred Number* (Glastonbury, UK: Wooden Books, 2006), 24.

19. See www.romancoins.info/12C-JulioClaud.HTML.

20. See note 16.

21. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 5.36.1-2. "Today you will be with me in Paradise," Jesus had said to the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:43).

22. 2 Enoch 21:8.

23. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 2.30.9.

24. See John Taylor, *Icon Painting* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), 7; Egon Sendler, *The Icon, Image of the Invisible: Elements of Theology, Aesthetics, and Technique*, trans. Steven Bigham (Torrance, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1988), 153–64.

25. Anodea Judith, *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications), 290–91.

26. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1030; also 1031–1032.

27. Augustine, *Confessions* 9.11.27; Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 169. On the Council of Trent and purgatory, see J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed. (London/Sydney: Collins Liturgical, 2001), 2310, p. 687. For a history of the doctrine of purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

28. Roch A. Kereszty, *Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eucharistic Theology from a Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Perspective* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 197.

29. Stratford Caldecott, *The Radiance of Being: Dimensions of Cosmic Christianity* (Tacoma, WA: Angelico Press, 2013), 257, citing Vladimir Solovyov, *The*

Religious Poetry of Vladimir Solovyov, trans. Boris Jakim and Laury Magnus (San Rafael, CA: Semantron Press, 2008), 105.

30. Caldecott, *The Radiance of Being*, 250–75.

31. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2003), 229.

32. See Caldecott, *The Radiance of Being*, 258n12.

33. Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 258–61.

34. *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, fragments 2, 6.

35. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 53–65 (especially 65).

36. Although by this time, the traditional color symbolism is beginning to be lost: Mary is actually clothed in divine red and covered in blue (pure humanity), the wrong way round! Velasquez does the same.

37. Waltraud Herbstrith, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, trans. Bernard Bonowitz, 2nd Eng. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 185–87.

Chapter 6

1. Pius XII, *Musicae Sacrae Disciplinae* [The Subject of Sacred Music], 41, 43, 58. Online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_25121955_musicae-sacrae_en.html.

2. See Thomas Day, *Why Catholics Can't Sing: Revised and Updated with New Grand Conclusions and Good Advice* (New York: Crossroad, 2013).

3. Author's translation.

4. This chapter is an expansion of my article, "The Renewal of Sacred Music," in *Monastic Musicians Newsletter*, no. 35 (Winter 2012): 6–8.

5. Geoffrey Hindley, ed., *Larousse Encyclopedia of Music* (London/New York: Hamlyn, 1971), 35.

6. Jocelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 16–19, 29.

7. See, for example, www.voicesofeden.com.

8. Philo, *On Planting* 8–10, *Philo*, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (London: William Heinemann/Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 217–18.

9. Jerusalem Talmud, *Ta'anit* 20a.

10. Cited in Bernard Montagnes, *The Story of Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange: Founder of Modern Catholic Bible Study*, trans. Benedict T. Viviano (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 37. The ambo is a fixed lectern for the proclamation of Scripture.

11. Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, trans. M. M. Matesich (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 150–56.

12. Pius X, Instruction *Tra le Sollecitudini* [Among the concerns] (1903), 5. Online at http://www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html.

13. Society of St. John Evangelist, *Plainsong for Schools: Masses and Occasional Chants*, Part II (Paris, Tournai & Rome: Desclée & Co/Liverpool, Rushworth &

Dreaper, 1958), x. The prayer asks for a blessing of the lips and the mouth to sing God's praise.

14. Olivier Rousseau, *Histoire du Mouvement Liturgique: esquisse historique depuis le début du XIXe siècle jusqu'au pontificat de Pie X* [The story of the liturgical movement: a historical sketch, from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the pontificate of Pius X], Lex Orandi 3 (Paris: Cerf, 1945), 61–62, 222, 224–25.

15. I'm indebted to Elise Antreassian of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for passing me this information.

16. See Pierre Benoît, *Musiques actuelles chrétiennes* [Contemporary forms of Christian music], General Secretariat of the French Bishops' Conference, no. 1–2, p. 22.

17. Council of Laodicea, canons 15, 59.

18. *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon Re-edited for the Governors of the John Rylands Library: Volume II: the Translation with Introduction and Notes*, ed. and trans. Rendel Harris and Alphonse Mingana (Manchester: The University Press, 1920), Odes 7:7 (p. 240), 8:10-11 (p. 254).

19. Ode 12:3-4 (Harris and Mingana, p. 272).

20. Author's translation.

21. Ode 26:5-7 (Harris and Mingana, p. 352).

22. theodesproject.net.

23. *The Divine Office* (Roman Rite), vol. 1, p. 552*.

24. "Divinum Mysterium," no. 33, in *The New English Hymnal,* ed. Anthony Caesar et al. (Norwich, UK: The Canterbury Press, 1986).

25. See Gilbert Markus, "Celtic Schmeltic," (1) in *Spirituality* 4, no. 21 (November-December 1998): 379–83, and (2) in *Spirituality* 5, no. 22 (January-February 1999): 57–61.

26. Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica* [Gaelic songs], ed. John MacInnes, new ed. (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1992).

27. Ibid., 253.

28. *Pistis Sophia* 6.144.

29. See Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001/2013); June Boyce-Tillman, *The Creative Spirit: Harmonious Living with Hildegard of Bingen* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2000).

30. Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (New York/Godalming: Picador, 1985/1986), 161.

31. Hildegard of Bingen, "Book of Divine Works 1.2," in *Hildegard of Bingen: An Anthology*, ed. Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies, trans. Robert Carver (London: SPCK, 1990), 91–93.

32. Ibid.

33. Hildegard, *Scivias* [Know the Ways], Book 1, Vision 6.

34. See www.cosmosdance.com. We were in the church of Notre Dame de France, the French church in London, which has a tapestry of Wisdom above the high altar (see chap. 5).

35. See Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth,* 124–167.

36. Marc Vella, *Eloge de la fausse note* [Praise for the wrong note], (Montreal: Le Jour, 2011), 20–21 (my translation). For *gnosis*, Vella has "la haute connaissance," literally "high knowledge," which is how the Greek *gnosis* is usually translated in French. See also www.marcvella.com.

37. Vella, *Eloge de la fausse note*, 28 (my translation).

38. Author's translation.

Chapter 7

1. Quoted in Angéla Lampe, "Emile Nolde et la Danse" [Emile Nolde and dance], in C*atalogue de l'Exposition 'Traces du Sacré'* [Catalogue of the 'Traces of the Sacred' exhibition], ed. M. Alizart (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2008), 195–97. This citation, 195 (my translation).

2. Ariane Dollfus, "Chorégraphe Angelin Preljocaj: danse avec les dieux" [The choreographer Angelin Preljocaj: dancing with the gods], *La Vie* (June 24, 2010): 22–23.

3. Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, "Dance in the Liturgy," *The Canon Law Digest* 8 (1978): 78–82. Online at www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDWDANCE.HTM.

4. This chapter is based on Dominic White, "Dance in Christianity: An Essay in *Ressourcement*," *Sobornost* 35, nos. 1–2 (2013): 81–122, which gives a full listing of all the sources.

5. I'm indebted to Indian dancer Pravarshan for this observation. An Indian Catholic schooled in classical Indian dance, Pravarshan sees his work as a dialogue with Hinduism. http://actual.pravarshan.fr.

6. Mishnah, *Sukkah* 5.4.

7. Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, 55, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

8. Philo, *Special Laws* 1.207.

9. Plato, *Timaeus* 40C. Plato also said that the best way for people to learn that the "good" life was truly pleasurable was to actually *dance* to the words of philosophy (*Laws* 2/653–66).

10. Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 80-84; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.17.

11. E.g., Franz von Stuck's *Salomé* (the traditional name for Herodias's daughter). Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé* (1891) was notorious and was banned for a while. It inspired Richard Strauss's opera of the same name (1905), in which Salome dances the Dance of the Seven Veils.

12. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7.7.45, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 434–35.

13. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen* 12, in Roberts and Donaldson, 107; *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Similitude 9.2, 4, ed. and trans. Helmut Koester and Carolyn Osiek (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 215–16.

14. *Protoevangelium of James* 7.1, in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, ed. and trans. J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 60.

15. Ignatius, *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.

16. Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.8.

17. Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, 9.23; 27.66.

18. Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise on the Titles of the Psalms* 86.58-59. My translation is based on Ronald E. Heine, ed. and trans., *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 138–39.

19. *Victimae Paschali*, in *New English Hymnal*, no. 519, which follows the medieval Sarum Use (variation) of the Roman liturgy. The Sarum Use belonged to the Gallican (French) family of Uses and is the origin of some distinctive features of the Anglican/Episcopal liturgies. Sadly, verse 7 of the *Victimae Paschali* was irredeemably anti-Semitic. It is bowdlerized in the *New English Hymnal* and was suppressed in the Tridentine Missal of 1570, leaving only seven verses from the original eight.

20. See theholybiscuit.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/conference-programme-fri-30th-march-sat.html.

21. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 432A, in *Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity*, trans. James Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 514–15.

22. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* 212A, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Colm Lubheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 165.

23. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy* 212A, 337C–340A; *The Divine Names* 697B, 704D–705A, in Lubheid, 189–90; 74, 78.

24. Procopius, *Buildings* 1.1.35/17–19, trans. H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Paul the Silentiary, "The Magnificence of Hagia Sophia," in W. Lethaby and H. Swainson, *The Church of Sancta Sophia Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building*, (New York: Macmillan, 1894), 42–45**;** Nicoletta Isar, *XOPÓC* (Chorós), *The Dance of Adam: The Making of Byzantine Chorography* (Leiden: Alexandros Press, 2011), 80.

25. Paul the Silentiary, "Magnificence of Hagia Sophia," lines 830–838; Isar, *XOPÓC*, *The Dance of Adam*, 128–130, 132, 197–208.

26. Isar, *XOPÓC, The Dance of Adam*, 49–57, 64, 65, 68, 78–86.

27. See http://www.cosmosdance.com.

28. Personal e-mails from Ellis Saul and Yamit Salazar of Eliot Smith Dance Company, http://eliotsmithcompany.com, June 3 and 4, 2013, concerning *Dancewalk*, a choreographic tour of three churches in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on May 18, 2013.

29. *Acts of John* 94–96 in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 318–20. I have amended Elliott's translation. For an online translation, see gnosis.org/library/hymnjesu.html.

30. John Lash, *The Mystic Jesus: Hanged Man and Dancer: Gnostic Heresy in the Paris Eadwine Psalter*, 2008, http://www.metahistory.org/psychonautics/Eadwine/MysticJesus.php.

31. Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha* 80.

32. See note 1.

33. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* 1.23; Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, *Homélies* [Sermons], ed. M.-A. Delaroche, vol. 3 (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1925), 294–97. I cannot find an English edition of the Curé's sermon on dance, though it's much discussed (and misunderstood) in English on the Internet.

34. There were also dances at Toledo Cathedral, but these did not survive the Counter-Reformation.

35. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 3.

36. Such as Bertrand Russell's radio debate in 1948 with the Jesuit philosopher Frederick Copleston. Reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), 144–68; see especially 147.

37. Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, 2nd ed. (London: Fontana, 1993), 4, 206–37. See also http://infed.org/mobi/howard-gardner-multiple-intelligences-and-education.

38. See Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 15, 38–39, 68, 83–86, 94, 98–100.

39. See Vladimir Koudelka, *Dominic* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 89–107, 181.

40. The usual—and rather arcane—English translation is "circumincession."

41. Nicoletta Isar, *XOPÓC, The Dance of Adam*, 159–69.

Chapter 8

1. Pierre de Laborde, *Eglises de France: Eglises d'Auvergne et du Berry: Abbatiale Saint Austremoine—Issoire* [Churches of France: churches of the Auvergne and Berry: abbey church of Saint Austremoine, Issoire], (KTO TV, 2005). Although entirely in French, it's quite clear what the images are.

2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd. ed. (Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference), 2116.

3. And see video 1, 6.00–6.20.

4. According to Roy Gillett, *The Secret Language of Astrology: The Illustrated Key to Unlocking the Secrets of the Stars* (London: Watkins, 2012), 7. I have used this book for the summary of modern astrology which follows.

5. Translation of *Jubilees* by O. S. Wintermute, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 35–142.

6. Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* 2.114; cf. *Life of Moses* 2.122-23.

7. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.214, 217.

8. R. C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi: A Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956/1975), 121.

9. *Pahlavi Riyat* 48:1-107; *Avestas: Gathas*, Yasna 43, 48; see Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, 143.

10. Gregory Nazianzen, *Dogmatic Poems* 5.53-64.

11. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope, 5, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html.

12. The NRSV gives "rulers and authorities."

13. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 5.6; 5.38.5.

14. Gilles Quispel, *The Secret Book of Revelation: The Last Book of the Bible*, trans. Peter Staples (London: William Collins, 1979), 36. This somewhat eccentric book makes some interesting connections with Jungian psychology and the theories of Rudolf Steiner.

15. *Acts of John* 9; Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.17.1; and see chaps. 5 and 7.

16. Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.10-12. The Desert Father St. John Cassian (350–435) held that each person has a good and bad angel trying to influence him or her—a tradition continued in Islam—and that the sons of Seth (Adam's grandchildren, Gen 5:4-8) had a universal knowledge that they abused and corrupted when they intermingled with the wicked generation of Ham (Cassian, *Conferences* 8.21).

17. *Clementine Recognitions* 1.32, 4.27, 5.20, 8.22, 9.19, 9.26, 10.12.

18. Augustine, *City of God* 5.1-7.

19. Zeno of Verona, Tract 43.4.

20. Stratford Caldecott, *All Things Made New: The Mysteries of the World in Christ* (San Rafael, CA: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis, 2011), 46. See also Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 18–22, 84–88, 97–104.

21. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1832.

22. Bede the Venerable, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.30; Sulpicius Severus, *Life of Saint Martin* 5.12-14; Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 324.

23. Caesarius of Arles, Sermons 54, 95; Council of Braga, Canons 9–10. The Priscillians used the Gnostic *Acts of John* as Scripture, including the hymn-dance of Jesus discussed in chap. 7. See Augustine, Letter 237.

24. Bede, *On the Nature of Things,* especially 11, 17, 21; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 3.71, 4.13; *Differences* 2.29.52. See also Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe,* 129.

25. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.115.4. On the stars and the heavens in medieval culture, see C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 92–121.

26. See Anthony Storr, ed., *Jung: Selected Writings* (Fontana, 1983), 86–93. Jung was surprisingly skeptical of astrology, given his Gnostic leanings. He rejected any notion that the stars determine our behavior, but he did believe in "synchronicity," i.e., significant coincidences ("everything happens for a reason"). He thought astrology was a "projection" onto the stars and that the signs of the zodiac represented different human temperaments. He admitted that sometimes there were striking coincidences, sometimes using astrology in psychoanalysis. This implies that he accepted that the stars could influence us without ultimately determining our behavior; see "Letter to Robert L. Kroon, November 15, 1958," in C. G. Jung, *Letters,* vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Adler, trans. Jeffrey Hulen (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 463–64.

27. John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, Part 1, Line 163.

28. See Daniel Corkery, "The Bardic Schools," in *The Bardic Source Book: Inspirational Legacy and Teachings of the Ancient Celts*, ed. John Matthews (London: Blandford, 1998), 26–42; Ruth Sawyer, *The Way of the Storyteller*, rev. ed. (New York/London: Penguin, 1962), 65. For a modern-day bard school, see www.the-bardschool.blogspot.co.uk.

29. A. S. Byatt, *The Children's Book* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), 113.

30. Patrice Chaplain, *City of Secrets: The Extraordinary True Story of One Woman's Journey to the Heart of the Grail Legend* (London: Robinson, 2007).

31. Michael King, Louise Marston, et al., "Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health: Results from a National Study of English Households," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 202 (January 2013): 68–73.

32. C. G. Jung, "Psychotherapists or the Clergy," in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (London & New York: Routledge, 1933/2001), 226–50.

33. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.4.1-4, 1.5.3, 1.11.4.

Chapter 9

1. See Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: Continuum, 2003), 212; and *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 149.

2. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.212-17; and see chap. 8.

3. See Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 193–94. The scheme doesn't work perfectly. For example, the birds of the air might be represented by the cherubim which were on the mercy seat of the Ark, which was inside the sanctuary. But the correspondence between the Ark and day one and the veil and day two is very clear.

4. Barker, *The Great High Priest*, 269–70. Also G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 233 and n2.

5. See Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1, *The Lady in the Temple* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2012). Margaret and I interpret the Josian reform differently.

6. See "Orthodoxy and the Environment," www.patriarchate.org/environment.

7. St. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66.

8. Author's translation.

9. See also Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 4.14.2-3.

10. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 48–51.

11. In Rome they still celebrate with "stational churches": so, for example, the opening of Mass and penitential rite may be at St. Praxides. The congregation will then process to St. John Lateran for the rest of Mass.

12. The Gnostic *Discourse of the Eighth and the Ninth* contains a ritual for ascent that includes sounds, such as "Zoxathazo aoo ee ooo eee oooo . . ." (probably a corruption of *Doxatheso YHWH*, "May the Lord be glorified"), in *The Nag*

Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. James Brashler et al. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 57/p. 324.

13. *Testament of Adam* 1–2.

Chapter 10

1. Peter Berger, a sociologist of religion, wrote as far back as 1969 of the collapse of the "plausibility structures" of Western religion through the process of secularization. See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 127–53.

2. Vatian Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 33, 39, 54.

3. Author's translation.

4. In G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 187, 190, 197; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 5.104.1, p. 209.

5. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 229, 233.

6. Ibid., 249–54, 243.

7. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 263–280.

8. Denis Villepelet, *L'accélération du temps et l'excès du présent* ["The acceleration of time and the excess of the present"], course taught at the Institut Catholique, Paris, 2010–11; see also his *L'avenir de la catéchèse* ["The future of catechesis"] (Ivry-sur-Seine: Editions de l'Atelier, 2003), 22–25, and Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London/New York: Verso, 1995 [1992]).

Appendix

1. Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2001).

2. Ibid., 10; Evagrius, *On the Vices Opposed to the Virtues; On the Eight Thoughts;* and *On Thoughts*, all in *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, ed. and trans. Robert E. Sinkewicz (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 60–90, 136–82.

3. Rohr and Ebert, *Enneagram*, 21–22.

Index

Note: Given the subject matter of the book, mention of God, Jesus Christ, and knowledge is to be found on almost every page. So although all of these are to be found in the index, this is generally for the less common subjects associated with them. For example, under Jesus Christ, there is "and origins of liturgy," "parables of," and so on. For "Incarnation," Resurrection," and so on, please look under those headings.

Abraham, 133–34, 138, 177
abuse, 5, 38, 51, 52, 55, 124, 163–64, 167, 174, 178, 189, 205 n. 15
Acts of John, 42, 74, 120–22
Acts of Peter, 42, 61, 63
Adam and Eve, 37–39, 61, 65, 70, 84, 116, 119, 165, 205 n. 16
Age, astrological, 132
  Age of Aquarius, 9, 26, 62, 131–32, 139
  Age of Pisces, 26, 62, 129, 132, 139
agraphon, agrapha, 61
alchemy, 9, 14
aleph (Hebrew letter), 59, 75
altar rails, 157, 162
Amphion, 92
Angelico, Fra (Blessed John of Fiesole) *(Last Judgment, Noli Me Tangere)*, 116
angels, 4, 9, 10, 16, 21, 24, 26, 28, 33, 35, 37, 38, 43–49, 54, 60, 66, 70–73, 75, 78, 81, 88, 89, 96, 98, 100–103, 106, 114, 115–19, 122–25, 127, 129, 133, 134, 137, 138, 142, 145, 146, 149, 151–52, 155, 157, 159, 160, 162, 165, 171, 172, 176–79, 185, 192, 197 n. 35
  archangels, 47, 78, 197 n. 36
  dance of (*see* Dance, Angelic)
  fallen, 38, 40, 45, 48–49, 54–56, 59, 66, 69, 72, 77, 78, 81, 82, 85, 89, 100, 111–14, 122, 129, 134–43, 145–47, 158, 159, 163, 164, 168, 173, 192, 205 n. 16
  guardian, 48, 137
  as stars, 33, 40, 47–49, 55, 60, 72–73, 75, 100, 111–12, 127, 133, 141, 146, 164, 165, 173, 176, 177, 183
anointing, 35, 84, 179
  of musicians, 96, 104, 175
  of the sick (sacrament), 163–64, 179
anti-Semitism, 32, 33
anxiety, 13, 19, 52, 53, 64, 130, 140, 171, 181
Apocrypha, 32, 34–36, 37, 38, 42, 44, 49, 60, 65, 80, 120, 124, 134, 135, 151, 155, 172, 176, 196 n. 9, 198 n. 18
  meaning of, 34, 195 n. 3
Apostolic Constitutions, 155
Apostolic Tradition, 40, 68–72, 155, 165
Aquarius, Age of. *See* Age, astrological, Age of Aquarius

Aquinas, St. Thomas, 6, 88, 140, 142
Aristotle, 184
Arius, Arianism, 97
Ark
  of the Covenant, 89, 111, 117, 123, 124, 154, 176, 206 n.3
  of Noah, 75
Art, arts, 6, 7, 23, 25, 30, 46, 59–63, 67–68, 70–75, 91–127, 144, 145, 149, 161, 170, 183, 186, 187
  sacred, 6, 22–23, 32, 41–43, 45, 88, 101, 91–130, 144, 174
artists, 14, 15, 37, 68, 105, 106, 109, 112, 117, 125, 145
  and mental health, 142–47
  status of, 144
ascension, ascent, 2, 4, 17, 21, 33, 44–46, 63, 69, 72, 73, 76, 78, 80–82, 85, 97–98, 100, 104, 105, 107, 114, 116, 122, 125, 126, 136, 145, 146, 153, 155, 156, 161, 162, 174, 177, 183, 192, 206 n. 12
Ascension of Isaiah, 34, 44, 48, 78, 80, 125, 165
aspect, astrological, 132
astrology, 9, 14, 26, 38, 49, 74, 128–47, 171, 172, 177, 178, 205 n. 26
atonement, 56, 94, 95, 99, 150, 175
Augustine, St., 35, 83, 95, 138, 187
AUM. *See* OM
aura, 18, 20, 85
authority, authorities, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 19–21, 23, 25, 27, 34, 40, 48, 58, 65, 97, 106, 136, 155, 156, 159, 168, 172, 179, 183, 197 n. 38, 204 n. 12
Awareness 9, 12, 18, 59, 63, 64, 105, 126, 163, 169, 171, 172, 177

Balthasar, Hans Urs von, 87, 88
baptism, 39, 40, 47, 55, 65, 67–76, 88, 96, 115, 123, 139, 153–55, 162, 174, 179, 192
  as ascent, 72
  as death, 70
  as enlightenment, 47
  as regeneration, 71
  as resurrection, 53, 71, 133, 137, 182
Bar/Bat Mitzvah, 95
Barker, Margaret, 55–57, 87, 90, 193 n. 2, 195 n. 3, 206 n. 5
Basil of Caesarea, St., 35, 39, 40, 114, 154
battle. *See* war, warfare
Bauckham, Richard, 35
Beat poets, 12, 15
Beatitudes, 53, 75, 112
Benedict XVI, Pope, 13, 135, 196 n. 4
Berry, Thomas, 182
biodynamic gardening, 130
bipolar disorder, 144–45
Blake, William, 57
Blavatksy, Helena, 14
body, 2, 6, 9–11, 14, 16, 18–20, 22, 25, 28, 47, 78, 80, 81, 83, 85, 93, 109, 114, 115, 121–23, 126, 155, 157, 161, 162, 165, 168, 169, 171, 172, 174, 175, 178, 181, 187, 191, 192
  of Christ, 18, 35, 40, 45, 80, 84, 105, 109, 113, 118, 123–25, 153, 155, 157, 161, 162, 178
  in liturgy, 108, 109, 113
  as microcosm, 20, 28, 47, 153
  "subtle," 129
  as temple 80, 153
bonds, binding, 43, 56, 57, 59, 60, 65, 74, 94, 106, 107, 150, 151, 173, 175
Botticelli, Sandro *(Mystical Nativity)*, 116, 123
brokenness, breaking, 20, 40, 55, 56, 59, 60, 66, 84, 90, 94, 95, 106, 107, 115, 139, 142, 143, 146, 150, 151, 158, 161, 163, 164, 173, 178, 192
Buddhism, 10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 22, 24, 89, 92, 103, 187
Bulgakov, Sergei, 87

Caesarius of Arles, St., 83, 139
Caldecott, Stratford, 87, 139
Carmina Gadelica, 100, 101
carols, 48, 104, 111, 122
Cassian, St. John, 205 n. 16
catechumens, catechumenate, 68–71
Cathedral dance. *See* Dance—Easter
Celestine Prophecy, The (James Redfield), 20
Celtic Christianity, 16, 27, 38, 43, 63, 171, 172
  and music, 99–101, 176, 187
Celtic spirituality, 9, 27, 28, 171, 172
chakras, 9, 18, 76–82, 89, 93, 98, 104, 105, 137, 165, 171, 172, 174, 175, 192
channeling, channel, 9, 18, 21, 22, 76, 77, 94–96, 153
  Ministry of Reading Word of God as, 94–96
chant, 76, 95, 96, 175
  Corsican, 94, 105
  Gregorian, 91, 94, 96, 103
  Maronite, 93
  Melkite, 93
chariot-throne (Merkabah), 111, 118, 176. *See also* throne
charity, 11, 18, 30, 65, 139, 162, 179
Chartres cathedral, 27, 49, 129, 130
  labyrinth, 116
Chora fresco of the Resurrection, 119
choreography. *See* liturgy
choreosophy, 109, 121
Choros of Light, 119, 176
Christ, Cosmic. *See* Jesus Christ, as Cosmic Christ, in glory
Christian, meaning of, 71, 163
Christianity
  Eastern, 6, 17, 19, 23, 40, 48, 50, 80, 88, 93, 96, 102, 109, 156, 157, 172, 196 n. 8
  Western, 6, 31, 47, 92, 96, 101, 109, 148, 157, 196 n. 8, 207 n.1
Church
  Armenian Apostolic, 96
  building as microcosm, 153, 160
  Catholic, Roman Catholicism, 5, 6, 13, 18, 23, 27, 31, 32, 40, 41, 47, 51, 64, 73, 82, 83, 86, 88, 95, 96, 99, 123, 128, 148, 158, 163, 192, 195 n. 3, 202 n. 5
  Episcopal/Anglican, 18, 41, 148, 203 n. 19
  Evangelical/Protestant, 56, 148
  Orthodox Churches, 18, 19, 23, 24, 44, 87, 88, 93, 96, 122, 195 n. 3, 206 n. 6
circle, 33, 43–45, 60, 62, 63, 74, 82, 102, 103, 109–11, 115–19, 121, 124, 129, 131, 135, 139
Clement of Alexandria, 36–39, 72, 73, 113, 117, 136, 137 139, 156, 179, 185, 196 n. 8
Clementine Homilies, 42, 61, 69, 137, 138
clock, astrological/astronomical, 49, 130, 140, 177
colors, symbolism of, 76, 78–81, 92, 132
community, 10, 18, 19, 24, 30, 36, 40, 64, 65, 69–71, 80, 96, 119, 144, 146, 150, 156, 158, 161, 162, 164, 165, 170, 171, 174, 178, 181, 183, 185
compassion, Boddhisatva of, 89
compassionate communication. *See* nonviolent communication
confession. *See* reconciliation, sacrament of
Confirmation 72, 84, 158, 163, 175, 179, 181
conjunction, astrological, 68, 131, 132, 177
conscience, 11
consciousness, 9, 12, 18–20, 25, 64, 65, 79, 112, 122, 125, 147, 169, 171, 174, 178
  altered state of, 9, 18, 70, 109
  "Christ consciousness," 17
  "Krishna consciousness," 17

Copernicus, Nicholas, Copernican astronomy, 46, 157, 186
corona. See C*horos* of Light
Counter-Reformation (Catholic), 16, 41, 203 n. 33
covenant, 55, 154
  ark of. *See* ark, of the covenant
  everlasting, 55
  with Noah, 70
creation, 10, 19, 20, 30, 31, 33, 37, 39, 42, 44, 49, 57, 60, 61, 72, 73, 76, 80, 87, 89, 92–94
  bonds of, healing and renewal of (re-creation), 33, 56, 61, 63, 65, 66, 85, 90, 95, 96, 102, 107, 111, 112, 114, 126, 142, 143, 150, 152, 154, 155, 161, 163, 164, 172, 174, 175, 178, 180
  days of, 70, 74, 151, 185
  praise of, 49, 104, 165, 174
  unity of, 43, 65, 107
cross, 26, 75, 79, 85, 90, 99, 119, 124, 139–41, 147, 149, 152, 153, 156, 160, 161, 179, 184, 198 n. 11, 199 n. 20
  Celtic, 43, 63
  Cosmic, 42–44, 48–60, 69, 74, 85, 90, 94, 98, 118–20, 146, 173–75
  dynamic of Cosmic Cross, 63–66, 89, 107, 180–83
  sign of, 39, 41, 69, 115, 154
culture, 5, 12, 15, 18, 28, 39, 64, 68, 104, 109, 126, 133, 137, 155, 169–71, 177, 205 n. 25
  crisis or "break" or "cut," 97–98
  "Culture wars," 5, 31, 65, 181

Da Vinci Code, The (Dan Brown), 2, 4
dance, 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 18, 19, 23, 105, 108–26, 129, 137, 143, 169, 175–77, 182, 183, 186, 202 nn. 5, 9, 11
  Angelic/cosmic/heavenly, 40, 49, 55, 73, 75, 111, 112, 114–17, 119, 142, 149, 165, 172–77, 182
  Easter (cathedral dance), 1, 2, 5, 115–16, 176–77
  Ethiopian Orthodox, 123
  Gnostic, 74, 120–23, 137, 177, 205 n. 23
  and knowledge, 28, 113, 115, 116–19, 121, 122, 126
  and liturgy, 19, 108, 112–14, 117–20, 160
  Los Seises, 49, 123–25, 157, 179, 203 n. 33
  and presence, 125–27, 149
  as repentance, 115, 116, 126
  wisdom as dancer and choreographer, 33, 111, 114, 122, 139, 150, 176, 181
Daniélou, Jean, Cardinal, 34
Dante Alighieri, 82, 174, 190
David, King
  as dancer, 111, 117, 123, 124, 176
  as musician, 23, 93, 175
deacon, 69, 71, 95, 156
Dead Sea Scrolls, 3, 195 n. 3
death, 43, 57, 59, 66, 69, 70, 80, 83–85, 106, 116, 134, 138, 161, 175
debt, 107
democracy, 26
devil, devils, evil spirits, 24, 68, 93, 134, 139, 143, 189. *See also* angels, fallen
devotions, 51, 64, 88, 123, 149, 159, 165, 180, 192
Diaghilev, Sergei, 180, 116
Didache, 40, 155
Didascalia, 155
Dionysius, Pseudo-. *See* Pseudo-Dionysius
divinization *(theosis),* 17, 63, 75, 80–81, 87, 89, 96, 114, 129, 165
divorce, 107, 164, 168
Dominic, St., 80
  Nine Ways of Prayer, 127
Dominicans, 16, 43

dominions. *See* principalities and powers
Dryden, John, 144
Dura-Europos, baptistery of, 67–76, 155

earth, 9, 10, 12, 13, 19, 24–26, 33, 42–46, 49, 51–56, 59, 61–64, 72, 74, 76, 78, 84, 86, 87, 95, 96, 99, 102, 103, 105–8, 110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 119, 122, 124, 130–33, 138, 143, 146, 151–53, 156–62, 164, 169, 176, 178, 186, 188, 189, 192
  new, 26, 33, 53, 62, 86, 121, 122, 162, 170
east, 28, 31, 39, 98, 135, 172
  liturgical, 39, 154, 163
Easter, 1, 5, 35, 45, 49, 85, 88, 93, 99, 115–19, 133, 137, 140, 155, 178
  dance (*see* dance, Easter [cathedral dance])
  vigil, 49, 60, 69–76, 116, 154, 158, 160
Eastern Orthodoxy. *See* Orthodox Church
Eastern philosophies and religions. *See* religion, Eastern and Eastern philosophies
Ebert, Andreas, 189–92
Eckhart, Meister, 16
ecliptic (astrological), 131, 139
ecology, 2, 6, 9, 10, 15, 19, 25, 26, 30, 153, 167, 169, 180, 183
economics, economy, 6, 14, 53, 107, 110, 152, 170, 175
ecumenism, 65, 181–82
Eden, Garden of/Paradise, 39, 41, 42, 45, 75, 78, 82, 117, 119, 133, 152, 153, 164, 174, 199 n. 20
eight, number, 45, 60, 62, 71, 74–76, 80, 85, 93, 115, 121, 129, 132, 146, 182, 189, 203 n. 19, 206 n. 12
elements, 23, 33, 45, 49, 54, 60, 72, 75, 78, 87, 94, 100, 102, 106, 132, 133, 136, 143, 146, 151, 152, 161, 185
energy, energies, 10, 13, 18, 21, 22, 24, 27, 76, 77, 81, 85–87, 116, 174
enlightenment, 20, 71, 163, 174, 179, 180
Enneagram, 189–92
  as lost cosmology, 190, 191
Enoch, 33, 34, 36–38, 44–45, 47, 49, 54–55, 59, 69, 72, 75, 78, 81, 82, 96, 101, 103, 111–14, 118, 125, 134, 135, 137, 143, 150, 173, 176, 186, 197 nn. 30, 35
Environmental crisis 2, 15, 30, 169, 171, 180
Episcopal Church. *See* Church, Episcopal/Anglican
Epistle of the Apostles, 33, 45, 155
equinox, 25, 26, 69, 139, 140
Esotericism, 9, 11, 23–24, 38, 97, 109, 145, 185, 189
Estamira, 142–43, 146
Eucharist, 40, 46, 71, 82, 105, 118, 124, 129, 157, 174, 177, 179, 182
  adoration/Benediction of, 124, 165
  celebration of, 40, 160–62
  and Real Presence, 125–27, 160
Evagrius Ponticus, 189, 191
Evangelical churches. *See* Churches, Evangelical
evil, 6, 21–22, 24, 28, 43, 49, 55, 57–59, 61, 79, 143, 158, 183
exorcism, 69
Exultet, 116
eyewitness testimony, 21, 35–37, 40, 146, 178
Ezekiel, 47, 59, 111, 118, 119, 176

Fathers of the Church, 32, 35–39, 42, 49, 114, 123, 127, 156, 190
fear, 3, 11, 24, 28, 30, 39, 43, 56, 66, 76, 83, 88, 101, 130, 133, 136, 139, 143, 145, 161, 174, 187, 191

feminine, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 24, 67, 87–89, 99, 101, 102, 175, 182, 183, 191
Feminism, 25, 169
Ficino, Marsilio, 14
fire, 48, 53, 72, 75, 79, 83, 87, 88, 100–103, 118, 119, 131, 132, 150–52, 154, 158, 165, 176, 185
First Moved *(Primum Mobile)*, 43, 82, 197 n. 6
fish, fishing, 26, 37, 62, 129, 132, 139, 142, 147, 165, 188
Flood, Great, 55, 70, 75
Fludd, Robert, 14
forgiveness, 11, 43, 52, 141, 143, 164, 168, 181
Fox, Matthew, 182
Francis, Pope, 5, 110
Franciscans, 16, 104, 122
freedom, personal, 4, 9, 11–13, 26, 58, 64, 106, 169, 170, 187
Freemasonry, 15, 24
future, 13, 26, 36, 56, 58, 65, 66, 130, 135, 156, 172, 174, 177, 187
  loss of belief in, 13, 170–71, 187

Gaia, 9, 10, 65
Gardner, Howard, 126
Genesis, 16, 20, 30, 33, 37, 39, 44, 46, 48, 49, 54, 55, 70, 72, 73, 75, 84, 87, 133, 134, 138, 164, 177, 197 n. 35, 205 n. 16
Glastonbury, 27
global warming. *See* environmental crisis
gnosis. *See* knowledge
Gnosticism, Gnostics, 2–4, 15, 17, 20, 28, 33, 34, 36–40, 42, 45, 48, 60, 71, 74–76, 80, 87, 88, 97, 98, 101, 120–23, 137, 140, 145–46, 156, 162, 165, 169, 173, 177, 178, 180, 183, 187, 196 n. 9, 205 nn. 23, 26, 206 n. 12
God
  as dancer, 111, 176
  feminine aspect of, 6, 87–89
  knowledge of, 15, 23, 34–35, 38, 54, 58, 64, 70, 73, 82, 87, 116–18, 142, 146, 163, 172–74, 176, 179, 187
  name of, 75, 150, 151, and cf. 113
  proofs for existence of, 125–26
  Son of. *See* Jesus, Son/Word of God
  Word of, 42, 61, 95, 96, 98, 103, 106, 113, 139, 175, 193, 195 n. 3 (*see* Jesus, Son/Word of God)
golden calf, 110, 112
Gospel of Peter, 60, 63
Greenspan, Miriam, 22, 59
Gregorian chant. *See* chant, Gregorian
Gregory the Great, St. (Gregory I, Pope), 140, 189
Gregory Nazianzen, St., 135, 142
Gregory of Nyssa, St., 42, 115, 117, 153
grief, 22, 53, 54, 59, 64, 85, 89
Guénon, René, 198 n. 11
guilt, 3, 4, 6, 11, 22, 51, 54, 55, 57, 78, 82, 159, 173, 196 n. 9
Gurdjieff, George, 14, 23, 24, 189

Hagia Sophia. *See* Holy Wisdom, Church of
Harry Potter (J.K. Rowling), 20
healers, healing, 5, 9, 11, 13, 18–23, 25, 28–30, 33, 43, 47, 52, 56, 57, 59, 63, 66, 70, 77, 80–81, 84–86, 93–94, 96, 99–102, 104, 107, 112, 117, 126, 133, 136, 141–43, 145–47, 152, 154, 157, 160, 161, 163–66, 172, 174–75, 178, 179, 183, 189, 192
  and salvation, 54, 62, 64, 164
healthcare. *See* medicine/healthcare
heaven, new, 26, 33, 53, 62, 84, 121, 160, 162, 170, 175, 188
heavens, 4, 17, 20, 28, 33, 37, 40, 42, 48, 49, 53–55, 59, 61, 63, 66–90, 93, 95, 98, 101–7, 114–16, 126, 133, 134, 136, 137, 142, 145–46,

151–52, 154, 155, 158, 160–61, 165–66, 174, 179, 181, 183, 186, 192, 197 nn. 30, 35, 205 n. 25
kingdom of the, 38, 39, 54, 61, 111, 114, 153, 173, 193 n. 5
third, 41–43, 45, 78–79, 82, 92, 96, 117, 159, 174
seven, seventh, 43–47, 48, 68, 74–79, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89, 92, 93, 96, 115, 125, 129, 147, 150, 156, 172, 174–75, 182, 183, 190, 192, 196 n. 25, 197 n. 35
eight, eighth, 45, 75, 76, 85, 115, 182, 206 n. 12
nine, ninth, 45, 48, 75, 76, 136, 137, 192, 206 n. 12
Hebrides, Outer, 48, 100–101
hell, 10, 45, 52, 53, 78, 82, 84, 86
Heraclitus, 185
Hermeticism, 14, 15, 28, 131
Hildegard of Bingen, St., 16, 101–5, 129, 176, 182, 187, 191
Hinduism, 10, 14, 17, 92, 103, 110, 182, 198 n. 11
hippie movement. *See* New Age
Hitler, Adolf, 57–58
holism, holistic, 9, 19, 24
Holocaust, 65
Holy Spirit, 8, 19, 31, 34, 35, 39, 43, 71, 76, 79–84, 87, 89, 93, 95, 98, 102–4, 106, 114, 139, 146, 153, 160, 161, 165, 172, 174–76, 181, 183, 187, 189, 192
fruits of, 74, 139, 141
gifts of, 34, 37, 39, 43, 45, 71, 76, 78–83, 86, 89, 95, 114, 125, 137, 141, 165, 172, 174, 179, 181
as wisdom, 88–89, 102, 103, 114, 160, 175
Holy Wisdom, Church of (Constantinople/Istanbul), 118, 122
house, astrological, 132
hymns, 43, 56, 63, 66, 96–99, 110, 116, 120, 149, 153, 158, 176, 187, 205 n. 23
I Ching, 14, 45, 182
ICHTHYS, 26, 62, 142, 147
iconostasis, 87, 127, 156, 157. *See also* sanctuary screen
icons, 85, 88, 102, 119, 129
color, symbolism of, 78–79, 81
Ignatian spirituality, Jesuits, 16, 190, 204 n. 35
Ignatius of Antioch, St., 114, 121
illness, 51, 54, 56, 163, 164
mental/psychological, 13, 37, 52, 141–47, 167–69, 178
incarnation, 17, 44, 58, 81, 82, 88, 95, 114, 121, 146, 165
incense, 18, 40, 47, 81, 87, 88, 95, 113, 134, 148, 150, 151, 155, 160, 165
India, 17, 18, 27, 74, 76, 80, 92, 130, 174, 182, 202 n. 5
individual, individualism, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18, 25, 28, 38, 57, 64, 101, 153, 168, 170, 183
initiation, 9, 10, 17 22, 38, 42, 67–72, 96, 117, 120, 137, 145, 153, 173, 174
instability, 2, 109, 132, 139, 142, 145, 171, 178
integration, 5, 6, 9, 52, 57, 63, 64, 66, 74, 76, 83, 85, 89, 98, 105, 107, 126, 137, 141, 161, 162, 166, 174, 175, 180, 183, 192, 198 n. 11
interconnection, interconnectedness, 9–11, 24, 26, 125, 171, 172
Irenaeus of Lyon, St., 35–37, 42–45, 60, 62, 70, 75–76, 78–80, 146, 196 nn. 9, 25
Isaiah, 34, 43–45, 48, 58, 62, 78, 82, 96, 101, 125, 139, 144, 152, 161, 165, 173

James, St., 36, 37, 106, 144, 155, 156, 163, 164, 172, 179
Jeremiah, 128, 197 n. 5
Jerusalem, 39, 43, 59, 62, 78, 88, 89, 96, 101, 111, 115, 135, 146, 152, 155, 165, 176, 178, 195 n. 3

Jesus Christ
agony in the garden, 36, 37, 38
as Cosmic Christ, in glory, 2, 9, 10, 16–18, 23, 85–86, 152–57, 171
as dancer, 117, 120–23
as healer/savior, 2, 20, 26, 33, 36, 47, 64, 70, 99, 120, 135, 146, 155, 164, 178, 180, 183
Name of, 33, 47, 66, 113, 176
and origins of liturgy, 39, 152–57
overcoming the powers and principalities, 48, 49, 100, 127, 135–37, 140, 142, 150, 166, 177, 183
parables of, 6, 37–38, 59, 126, 155, 166, 184
second coming, 83
as singer, 94, 107
Son of Man, 113
Son/Word of God, 26, 85, 89, 94, 101, 135, 163, 175
suffering and passion of, 51, 60, 117, 122
as temple, 153
temptations, 48
as wisdom, 87, 88
Jesus Christ, Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the New Age (Vatican provisional report), 16
Jews, Judaism, 3, 4, 7, 11, 17, 20, 22, 26, 32, 34, 36, 42, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51, 58–60, 63, 65, 73–75, 94, 95, 106, 107, 110–14, 133–36, 139, 140, 145, 150, 152, 165, 168, 173, 176, 182, 186, 195 n. 3, 199 n. 13
Job, 33, 48, 59, 74, 110, 112, 185
John the Baptist, St., 44, 51, 56, 112
John (the Evangelist), St., 16, 17, 33, 35–37, 40, 47, 53, 56, 59, 62, 71, 72, 76, 80, 81, 85, 88, 89, 93, 94, 104, 106, 117, 137, 144, 153, 155, 156, 160, 161, 163, 168, 172, 175, 177, 179, 181
John of Gaza, 60
John Paul II, St., Pope, 15, 16, 88
Jordan Codices, 4, 193 n. 2
journey. *See* movement
Jubilee, Year of, 107, 134
Jubilees, Book of, 33, 36, 38, 134, 138, 151, 152
judgment, 11, 21, 60, 112, 125, 162, 181, 191
day of, 83, 85, 116, 119
Jung, Carl (C.G.), 13, 20, 26, 62, 141, 146, 168, 178, 192, 204 n. 14, 205 n. 26
justice, social, 18, 152, 153, 158, 168, 178

Kabbalah, 17, 20, 28, 145, 182
Kereszty, Roch A., 86
Keyrouz, Marie, 93
kingdom of heaven. *See* heavens, kingdom of the
knowledge
distorted/false/stolen, 36, 37, 39–40, 42, 61, 65, 69, 75–77, 81, 84, 87, 122, 135, 140, 143, 146, 154, 169, 172, 173, 183
gift of Holy Spirit, 34, 45, 81, 82, 172, 165, 179, 190
of self, 2, 16, 86, 93, 142, 145, 163, 172, 186
as wound, 58–59
Krishna, 17
Kwa-yin, 89

Laban, Rudolf, 14, 109, 110, 121, 145
labyrinth, 1, 27, 115, 116, 176
Lagrange, Marie-Joseph, 95
Laing, R.D., 13
law, 15, 35, 42, 45, 51, 57, 91, 105–8, 134, 151, 152, 154, 157, 159, 162, 175–76, 178, 179, 181, 183
Leonard of Pistoia, 14
Levites, ministry of, 94–95, 99, 175
liberation, 137, 146, 158, 177
liberation theology, 149, 158, 178
Light, Divine, 42, 43, 47, 59, 60, 69, 73, 76, 78, 79, 82, 84, 85, 87, 89, 96, 98, 101, 102, 119, 120, 175

limits, 175. *See also* bonds, binding
liturgy, 5–7, 32, 39–42, 45, 47, 49, 51, 68–75, 78, 81–126, 147, 148–66, 172, 174, 178–80, 182, 183, 199 n. 4, 203 n. 19
  Byzantine, 23, 40, 93, 147, 157
  development of, 5–7, 32, 39–41, 150–51
  of the Eucharist, 71, 82, 118, 157, 161–62, 179 183
  gesture and movement in, as choreography/dance, 39, 49, 70, 108–9, 111, 113–15, 117–25, 127, 154, 159, 160, 176
  of the Hours, 165, 180
  Maronite, 93
  Melkite 93
  and music, 23, 91–97, 106, 149, 154, 160
  Roman (pre– and postVatican II), 39–41, 148, 160–62
  of temple, 150–52, 173
  and wisdom, 87–88, 104, 150, 157, 159
  of the Word, 95, 161
Logos, 42, 60, 104, 107, 113, 116, 175–76, 185
  meaning of, 94–95
  and music, 95–99
Lord of the Rings, The (J.R.R. Tolkien), 20
"Lost Document" plot 3, 5, 7, 167
love, 11, 12, 21, 22, 24, 38, 57–58, 66, 79, 84, 88, 90, 105–7, 109, 130, 131, 142, 158, 171, 184, 191
  God's love/love of God, 42, 64, 71, 86, 95, 106, 136, 148, 164, 165, 179, 187
  and knowledge, 39, 69, 122, 141, 143, 145, 150, 153, 157, 161, 162, 174, 179, 187, 192
  of neighbor and creation, 19, 39, 71, 76, 89, 102, 107, 122, 141, 143, 145, 150, 153, 157, 161, 162, 174, 179, 187, 192
McCabe, Herbert, 43
Magi, 70, 112, 135, 177
magic, 2, 9, 10, 14, 22, 24, 25, 28, 38 49, 61, 68, 69, 101, 133, 135, 137–40, 146, 151, 174, 177, 185
Mandala, 9, 103, 176, 182
Mandorla, 85, 189
Manoogian, Torkom, Patriarch, 96
marriage, 49, 53, 142, 164, 171
  annulment of, 107
  sacrament of, 19, 164, 168, 179–81
Marxism, 13, 149, 170
Mary Magdalene, St., 24, 35, 117
Mary, Virgin, 6, 39, 44, 79, 81, 88, 103, 123–24, 165, 182, 192, 200 n. 35
  as dancer, 114, 176
  as wisdom, 87–90, 102–3, 129, 137, 175–76
masculine, 5, 10, 19, 64, 87, 103
Mass. *See* Eucharist
Mass, Midnight, 49, 165
Maya, Mayan religion, 20, 28, 74, 130, 182, 183
medicine/healthcare, 18, 19, 21, 52, 55, 77, 101, 163, 169
medieval. *See* Middle Ages/medieval
Memling, Hans *(The Last Judgment)*, 85
Merkabah. *See* chariot-throne
Metanoia. See repentance
Michael, Archangel, 47, 48, 78, 89, 137, 197 n. 36
Microcosm-macrocosm relationship, 20, 28, 47, 77, 84, 102, 152–53, 160, 172, 175, 178
Middle Ages/medieval, 1, 3, 5, 16, 44, 45, 49, 57, 83, 96, 99, 104, 115–17, 124, 127, 129, 144, 157, 174, 177, 179, 197 n. 26, 203 n. 19, 205 n. 25
mind, 12, 54, 69, 114, 126, 143, 146
  body and spirit, 2, 6, 22, 25, 174
  of God, 54, 69, 98
Miriam, 22
Mishnah, 42, 110

Missa Campesina Nicaragüense, 149, 158, 178,
Moses, 24, 60, 133, 151–52, 154, 178
movement, 23, 24, 41, 44, 49, 52, 63–66, 78, 79, 96, 100, 105, 107, 108–13, 115, 117, 122, 124–27, 130–34, 142, 149, 154, 159–61, 169, 175, 181
music, 1, 5, 7, 12, 22, 24, 27, 28, 66, 74, 75, 91–109, 116, 120–21, 124, 125, 143, 144, 161, 182, 186, 187, 194 n. 17
  in church/liturgy, 18, 41, 47, 91–107, 115, 148, 154, 178
  cosmic *(musica mundana)*, 49, 90, 112, 115, 133, 176
  Eastern Christian, 2, 3, 93, 95, 96
  and healing, 22–23, 94–95, 154, 172, 175
  and knowledge, 95, 97–101, 175
  as law, 105–7, 175
  as ministry, 96, 104–5, 160
  musical scale, 74, 75, 93, 105
  as sound/vibration, 22–23, 92–94, 104, 172
  "style wars," 92, 97, 104
  therapy, 22–23
  and wisdom, 101–7, 172, 175–76
Musica mundane. *See* music, cosmic
mystery, mysteries (see also liturgy), 4, 9, 10, 32, 33, 37–39, 41–43, 61–63, 68, 70, 72, 93, 98, 99, 114, 115, 123, 143, 148, 149, 154, 158–60, 162, 164, 173, 174, 178–80, 183, 185
mysticism, 9, 13, 14, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24, 42–44, 69, 76, 80, 86, 88, 98, 99, 102, 104, 105, 109, 111, 116, 120, 123, 126, 145, 156, 161, 172–74, 182, 183, 186, 189, 191, 191, 199 n. 13

Nag Hammadi Library, 3, 36
nature, 2–6, 8–10, 12–19, 25, 27, 38, 30, 46, 54–57, 61–64, 66, 75, 79, 85, 92, 94, 99–101, 103, 105, 109, 115, 125, 126, 152, 159, 171, 178, 180–82, 185, 188, 190, 195
Nazism, 58, 173
Neale, J.M., 99
neighbor. *See* love of neighbor
Neoplatonism. *See* Plato, Platonism, Neoplatonism
New Age, 1, 6, 9, 12–17, 19, 24, 26, 28, 80, 169–71
  birth of, 12–13
new heaven and new earth. *See* earth, new and heaven, new
nine, number, 45, 48, 75, 82, 100, 118, 124, 127, 189, 190, 192
Noah, 70, 75, 151
nonreligious spiritualities, 2, 5, 6, 16, 19, 21, 26, 30, 47, 66, 76, 109, 120, 169, 171, 173, 183
nonviolent communication, 9, 19
Novena, 192
numbers, symbolism of, 45, 61, 71, 74, 75, 81, 92, 123, 136, 137, 151, 182, 185

occult, 15, 22, 24, 28, 38, 109, 189
octagon, 45, 74
Odes of Solomon, 97–99, 104, 176, 187
OM, 92
Orders, Holy, Sacrament of, 164, 179–80
organ (instrument), 1, 91, 94, 104, 176, 181
Orpheus, 23, 92
Orthodox Churches. *See* Church, Orthodox Churches

paganism, pagans, 1, 2, 25–27, 30, 38–39, 99–100, 108, 113, 127, 139, 140
pain, 5, 19–22, 26, 32, 64, 65, 77, 90, 140, 141, 144, 145, 164, 168, 181
Pantocrator, 41

parables. *See* Jesus, parables of
Paradise. *See* Eden, Garden of/Paradise
Parmenides, 185–86
Paul, St., 17, 18, 21, 33, 34, 36, 38, 41, 42, 45, 48, 50, 56, 60, 64, 66, 76, 82–84, 88, 98, 106, 112, 117, 126, 135, 136, 143, 153, 155, 158, 159, 168, 177, 184
Paul the Silentiary, 118, 122
peace, 9, 11, 58, 62, 66, 83, 91, 94, 113, 139, 152, 153, 164, 179, 185, 189, 191
  movement, 12, 169
  sign of/kiss of, 71
Perennialism, 14
perfection, 38, 83, 98, 106, 107, 124, 154, 162, 178, 185, 190, 191
Perichoresis, 127
Peter, St., 36–39, 42, 48, 61, 65, 69, 75, 138, 139, 144, 153, 155–56, 168, 172, 179, 187, 188
pews, in churches, 109, 122, 126
Philo (Judaeus) of Alexandria, 60, 73, 94, 106, 111, 112, 134, 150
Philosophia perennis. *See* Perennialism
pilgrimage, 2, 9, 10, 27, 115, 116, 156, 175
Pisces, Age of. *See* age, astrological, Age of Pisces
Pius X, St., 96
Pius XII, Pope, 39, 91
planets, 26, 43, 46, 60, 82, 105, 112, 130–32, 134, 137, 141, 151
Plato, Platonism, 43, 44, 59, 60, 112, 114, 117, 138, 173, 176, 184, 185, 202 n. 9
  Neoplatonism, 44, 60, 114
  Republic, 60
  Timaeus, 59, 119
  Theory of Forms, 154
Polycarp, St., 35, 62
Polyeleos. See *Choros* of Light
Postmodernism, 170–71
poverty, the poor, 18, 51–53, 65, 143, 149, 159, 162, 180
powers. *See* principalities and powers
prayer, 5, 17, 26, 31, 32, 35, 40, 42, 45, 49, 59, 69, 71, 72, 82, 83, 84, 86, 100, 101, 126, 129, 136, 140, 141, 150–52, 155, 158, 161, 162, 164–66, 172, 181, 192, 201 n. 13
  bodily, prayer with gesture/movement, 39, 49, 88, 109, 112, 113, 116, 126, 127, 154
  as preparation for celebration of liturgy, 95, 160, 175
Pre-Socratic philosophers, 184–86
Primum Mobile. *See* First Moved
principalities and powers, 48, 49, 78, 85, 100, 127, 128, 135–37, 139–40, 142, 150, 158, 177, 197 n. 36
procession, liturgical, 110, 112, 113, 118, 119, 112, 124–26, 160–61, 179
Procopius (historian), 118
Procopius of Gaza, 196 n. 5
Protestantism, 23, 32, 51, 82, 195 n. 3. *See also* Church, Evangelical/Protestant
Protoevangelium of James, The, 114
Providence, Divine, 26, 135, 138, 177
Prudentius, 43, 99
Pseudo-Dionysius, 117–19, 121, 122, 124
psychology, 6, 13, 17, 19, 20, 37, 51, 52, 57, 62, 74, 83, 84, 102, 107, 126, 133, 141, 144, 146, 169, 178, 183, 186, 204 n. 14
psychosis, 142–43, 178
psychotherapy. *See* therapy
Ptolemy, Claudius and Ptolemaic astronomy, 43, 46, 82, 174
purgatory, 6, 52, 82–85, 175, 182, 190, 199 n. 26
Pythagoras, 60, 73, 92, 95, 97, 112, 151, 173, 185–86, 189

quest, 4, 20, 162, 167
  personal, 16
Qumran. *See* Dead Sea Scrolls

Radcliffe, Timothy, 171
Raphael, Archangel, 47
Ratzinger, Joseph. *See* Benedict XVI, Pope
Ravenna, Italy, 48, 62, 66, 85, 116
RCIA. *See* Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
reading, ministry of, 95, 161, 175, 181
reconciliation, sacrament of (penance/confession), 51, 52, 163, 179
redemption, 11, 85, 99, 143, 175, 164
Reformation, 14, 41, 169, 170
  Counter-Reformation. (*see* Counter-Reformation, Catholic)
Reiki, 21
relationships, 6, 18, 56, 64, 66, 76, 101, 142, 144, 164, 171, 191
religion, 3–5, 8, 10–11, 15–17, 19–20, 23, 24, 27, 41, 53, 54, 57, 67, 93, 99, 109, 120, 144, 146, 165, 168, 171, 185. *See under individual religions*
  Eastern, and Eastern philosophies, 9, 10, 12, 13, 20, 171. *See* Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam
  Fundamentalist, 11, 21, 53
  interreligious relations/dialogue, 5, 65, 105, 172, 180, 182
  meaning of, 56–57
Re-membering, 74
Renaissance, 14, 28, 57, 96, 117, 169, 170
repentance, *metanoia*, 11, 32, 50, 51, 53–56, 59, 61–63, 65–66, 69, 82–84, 86, 89, 107, 115, 116, 126, 141, 142, 151, 162, 166, 169, 172, 173, 176, 179–81, 192, 199 n. 20
  as battle/spiritual warfare, 86, 136, 141, 145, 175
  as process, movement, 63, 64, 83, 107, 115, 126, 146, 166, 172, 176
repression, 13, 20, 51–52, 54, 141, 158, 169–70
Ressourcement. *See* sources, return to
resurrection, 17, 35, 45, 48, 50, 53, 59, 61, 64, 66, 71, 76, 83, 85, 89, 96, 100, 116–19, 121, 129, 133, 135, 140–42, 146, 149, 156, 157, 160, 174, 183
Revelation, 104, 146, 157, 167–69, 171, 178, 180, 183, 187
  book of (Apocalypse), 4, 33, 37, 39, 40, 47–49, 66, 70, 89, 90, 113, 134, 137, 139, 143, 145, 155, 169, 176, 177, 199 n. 4, 204 n. 14
  meaning of, 169, 199 n. 4
Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, 68, 69
ritual, 9, 10, 17, 21, 28, 29, 68, 76, 92, 101, 109, 110, 123, 148, 206 n. 12
Rohr, Richard, 189–92
Rosicrucianism, 15, 24, 109

sacraments, 19, 23, 51, 124, 138, 160–64, 179–80, 182. *See* individual sacraments
sacrifice, 11, 78, 108, 109, 120, 150, 153, 161, 165, 178
  meaning of, 153
Saint Austremoine, abbey church of, 128–29
St. Patrick's Breastplate, 63
salvation, 4, 20, 52–54, 62, 83, 143, 147, 149, 158, 184. *See* healers, healing, and salvation and Jesus Christ as healer/savior
Satan, 21, 48, 59, 69, 78, 89, 112, 124, 136, 143, 145, 168
Sauna, 18
screen, 40, 87, 127, 156–57, 162, 172, 179, 185, 186–88. *See also* iconostasis
  rood (crucifix), 157
Seises, Los. *See Los Seises*
self, 2, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 24, 25, 28, 65, 76, 79, 81, 82, 86, 93, 122,

131, 142, 145–46, 163, 168, 172, 181, 183, 186, 191, 192
losing false, 66, 186, 192
as prison, 66, 142, 161
Septuagint, 89, 195 n. 3
sexuality, 3, 5, 11–13, 15, 18, 19, 79, 109, 114, 167–69, 171
shadow side, 131, 141–42, 164, 178, 192
Shamanism, 9, 12, 15, 25, 92
Shepherd of Hermas, The, 113–14
sickness. *See* illness
Simon Magus, 69, 135, 138, 139, 161
sin, 3, 4, 6, 10, 50–56, 70, 73, 81, 95, 106, 107, 115, 116, 128, 138, 139, 141, 152, 154, 163, 173, 180, 183, 190, 192
Original, 79, 192 (*see* sin of the world/cosmic sin)
personal/individual, 57
Seven Deadly Sins, 82, 118, 190
sin of the world/cosmic sin, 56–57, 64, 70, 79, 141, 143, 159, 162, 164, 173, 179, 181
singing, 1, 12, 43, 48–49, 75, 78, 91–96, 98–99, 103–5, 107, 109–12, 114, 116, 118, 121, 149, 155, 161–62, 165, 175, 181, 200–201 n. 13
Skryabin, Alexander, 145
Solovyov, Vladimir, 86–89
Sophianic. *See* Sophiology
Sophiology, sophiological, 86–90, 102–4
sound, 22–23, 32, 92–94, 98, 102, 104–6, 150, 175, 179, 182, 206 n. 12
sources, 7, 10, 14, 68, 118, 170, 175, 176, 185
of Christian cosmology, 7, 32–42, 70, 113, 172–73
return to *(ressourcement),* 31–32, 195 n. 2
spas, 10, 14, 18
Speyr, Adrienne von, 88
spirit guides, 21
Spirit, Holy *see* Holy Spirit
spiritualities, 1, 3, 4, 6, 43, 108, 109, 112, 145, 170, 171, 179, 181
Christian, 2, 4, 5, 8, 16, 17, 19, 31, 53, 95, 101, 104, 122, 148, 163, 172, 175, 177, 181, 183–84, 188, 190
contemporary/nonreligious, 2, 5–7, 8–29, 30, 34, 38, 47, 76, 92, 99, 102, 116, 169–73, 182–83
square, 45, 74, 103, 115, 124, 132, 139, 175–78, 188, 205 nn. 25, 26
stars, 26, 28, 43, 62, 70, 71, 75, 78, 82, 89, 102, 110, 114, 116, 117, 119, 121, 124, 128–47, 150
as angels, 33, 40, 47–49, 55, 60, 72–73, 75, 100, 111–12, 127, 133, 141, 146, 164, 165, 173, 176, 177, 183
five-point, 124
six-point, 62, 63
eight-point, 45, 62, 71, 74–75, 80, 129, 132
twelve-point, 70, 73–74, 127, 129, 132, 137, 147
sixteen-point, 132
Steiner, Rudolf, 14, 18, 23, 93, 131, 145, 204 n. 14
Stravinsky, Igor, *Rite of Spring,* 108, 116
Succoth. *See* Tabernacles, feast of
suffering, 6, 22, 26, 27, 42, 43, 51–53, 56–60, 63, 65, 86, 89, 116, 120, 122, 143, 145, 159, 174, 175, 181
Sufism, 23, 28, 109
"Summer of Love," 12

tabernacle, 87, 88, 114, 151, 154, 176, 178
Tabernacles, feast of, 110, 113, 176
Talmud, 45, 78, 94, 99, 197 n. 35
Tam Sen, 92
Tara, 89

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 13, 182
temple, temples, 10, 11, 110, 140
  Church as 160, 185, 186 (*see* temple, Jerusalem)
temple, Jerusalem, 33, 39, 47, 59, 60, 73, 78, 88, 89, 114, 135, 136, 152, 153, 155, 161, 165, 173, 176–77, 195 n. 3
  and days of creation, 151, 178
  holy of holies, 101, 150–53, 156, 178, 187
  Josiah's reform of, 134, 152
  as microcosm, 59, 60, 151–53, 178
  veil of, 79, 134, 151–54
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 45
Testamentum Domini, 155–56
Tetraktys, 151, 185
theosis *see* divinization
therapy, 10, 13, 20–23, 59, 66, 73, 77, 93, 121, 133, 141, 152, 163, 168, 169, 188
Therapeutes, 112, 119, 176
throne, 47, 72, 74, 76, 78, 85, 88, 89, 103, 129, 151
Tomberg, Valentin, 87
transcendence, 22, 79, 105
transfiguration, 37, 44, 78, 85, 144
Transitus Paschalis ("Easter Cross-over"), 73, 133
tree, trees, 2, 49, 55, 62, 70, 75, 87, 103, 140, 154
  of Jesse, 79
  of knowledge, 37–38, 70, 74, 75, 80, 173
  of life, 38, 59, 61, 70, 74, 75, 79, 80, 152, 173
Trent, Council of, 83, 199 n. 26
Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, Les, 129
Tridentine Mass *see* liturgy, Roman (pre– and post–Vatican II)
Trinity, Blessed, 36, 71, 127
twelve, number, 36, 38, 70, 73–75, 89, 93, 113, 127–29, 131, 132, 134–37, 139, 141, 146–47, 150, 152, 155, 175, 177

Uriel, Archangel, 47, 100, 101

Vatican 3, 5, 16, 17, 22, 25
Vatican Council II, 31–32, 34, 41, 53, 68, 88, 89, 109, 148, 156, 159, 163, 171
Velazquez, Diego *(The Immaculate Conception)*, 89
Vella, Marc, 105–6, 201 n. 33
Venantius Fortunatus, 99
vibration, 10, 22–23, 80, 92–94, 104, 161, 171, 172
Villepelet, Denis, 186, 207 n. 8

Wagner, Richard, 58
Wagner, Winnie, 57–58
war, warfare, 5, 12, 22, 31, 38, 49, 55, 58, 65, 92, 99, 104, 110, 132, 134, 167, 170, 172, 185
  spiritual, 11, 38, 48–49, 59, 78, 86, 89, 90, 124, 136, 138, 139, 141, 145, 155, 158, 160, 175, 177–78, 186
water, 26, 39, 69–71, 75, 79, 102–3, 132, 139, 142
weather, 2, 49, 130, 138, 140
White, Lynn, 30
Wicca, 25
Wilson, A.N., 57–58
wisdom, 6, 12, 14, 15, 20, 23, 30, 33–35, 38, 39, 50, 55, 57, 67, 79–81, 86–90, 94, 97, 102–3, 109, 111, 118, 120, 122, 125 126, 133, 135, 137, 139, 140, 143, 146, 152, 164, 172, 174, 180–87, 189, 195 n. 3, 201 n. 31
  as Being of God, 87
  as choir mistress, 90, 92, 104–5, 111, 122, 139, 175, 176
  as dancer and choreographer, 33, 111, 114, 122, 139, 150, 176, 181

as divinization of creation, 87
harmozousa (harmonizer), 89–90, 111, 139, 193 n. 9
Holy Spirit as, 88–89, 102, 103, 114, 160, 175
icon of, 88, 102, 129
Jesus Christ as, 87, 88
and knowledge, 38–39, 55, 69, 80, 81, 107, 122, 142, 150, 153, 161, 162, 163, 165, 169, 175–79, 181, 182
and law, 105–8, 152, 157, 159, 162, 175–76, 179
and the liturgy, 87, 123, 148–50, 153, 156, 157, 159, 160, 171, 178–80
and philosophy, 184–86
as Virgin Mary, 87–90, 102–3, 129, 137, 175–76
Wise Men. *See* Magi
witchcraft, 15, 25, 38, 55, 128–29, 134, 172
world, engagement with, 2, 6, 10, 11, 16, 24, 30, 31, 46–47, 53, 62, 76, 80, 86, 118, 122, 143, 147, 152, 154, 161–62, 175, 183, 187
worship. *See* liturgy
wounds, 5, 7, 18, 20, 41, 52, 54, 56–58, 62, 117, 157, 163, 173

yoga, 10, 16, 18, 38, 139

zodiac, 26, 49, 70, 73, 127, 128–32, 134–40, 150, 177, 197 n. 30, 205 n. 26
Zoroastrianism, 135, 138, 177